

SPSO decision report

Case: 201205158, A Medical Practice in the Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board area
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C, an advocate, complained on behalf of Mrs A that there was avoidable delay in her medical practice diagnosing that she had unknowingly contracted a sexually transmitted disease (STD). She had been attending her medical practice for more than two years with the symptoms but it was not until she was referred to an STD clinic that this was diagnosed. When Mr C complained to us, Mrs A was still undergoing treatment for the condition.

After taking independent advice from one of our medical advisers, we upheld this complaint. Our investigation found that an opportunity to diagnose the STD in August 2009 was missed. The adviser was critical of a lack of detail in the clinical notes, which made it difficult to assess whether or not the condition could have been diagnosed even earlier than that. They said that delay in diagnosing STDs can have serious consequences, as the presence of one can indicate the presence of others, some of which can have serious health effects. Undiagnosed STDs can also be passed on to new or different partners. The adviser also said that the delayed diagnosis probably contributed to the length of Mrs A's treatment.

Recommendations

We recommended that the practice:

- apologise for the failings identified during our investigation;
- conduct a significant event audit of this matter and share the outcome with Mrs A and Mr C; and
- conduct an audit of a selection of medical notes across the practice to ensure that the standards set by the General Medical Council are being met, and if any failings are identified ensure that appropriate training and discussion at annual appraisal(s) takes place.