

SPSO decision report

Case: 201300224, A Medical Practice in the Lanarkshire NHS Board area
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Miss C suffers from an anxiety disorder, and had been prescribed diazepam (a medicine which helps to control feelings of anxiety) for a number of years. When she requested a repeat prescription, Miss C was told to call the practice. Miss C said she was then told in a phone conversation with her GP that her prescription for diazepam would be stopped after a period of reduction and that, in future, she would have to attend an appointment at the practice before a repeat prescription would be issued. Miss C told us that her prescription had not previously been monitored, and had been increased over the previous years. Miss C considered that it was wrong to stop the medication. She was dissatisfied with the explanation provided by her GP and also the manner in which he responded to the complaint, which she considered to be inappropriate and unsympathetic.

We took independent advice on this case from one of our medical advisers. The advice, which we accepted, was that the practice had not failed in their care of Miss C in relation to prescribing medication. However, in relation to the complaints handling, we found that although the GP provided reasonable explanations, the tone of his letters was unnecessarily sharp and at times insensitive, and his response could and should have been more considerate and empathetic.

Recommendations

We recommended that the practice:

- ensure that they and the GP reflect on the handling of this complaint to ensure that in future complaints are handled in an appropriate manner; and
- apologise to Miss C for the failures identified by this investigation.