

SPSO decision report

Case: 201302988, Lothian NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C, who is a prisoner, complained that the prison health centre stopped his prescribed medication without any warning or gradual reduction. Mr C had been prescribed zopiclone (a drug used to treat sleeping problems) and gabapentin (a drug for pain relief). The board told Mr C that his medication was stopped as he had failed to take it in the manner in which it had been prescribed. In addition, they said that Mr C would have been aware of the consequences of his medication being stopped if any discrepancies were found.

We found that the records showed that Mr C had tried to conceal the zopiclone rather than swallow it in front of staff. This led to him being reviewed by the mental health team, and the zopiclone prescription being discontinued. In addition, health centre staff carried out a spot check of his medication around a month later and he was found to have more gabapentin tablets than he should have had. The staff did not know, therefore, how much of the prescribed medication Mr C had been taking and he had admitted to buying non-prescribed drugs in prison.

We took independent advice on this from one of our medical advisers. The adviser said that although some patients can be affected if gabapentin is stopped abruptly, the health centre did not act unreasonably in discontinuing Mr C's medication immediately, given the difficulties in planning a gradual reduction.