

SPSO decision report

Case: 201304080, A Medical Practice in the Tayside NHS Board area
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C attended his medical practice suffering from vomiting, diarrhoea and pains in his stomach. A GP diagnosed gastroenteritis (inflammation of the stomach and intestines) but some five days later Mr C was taken to hospital, where it was found that his appendix had burst, leading to peritonitis (inflammation of the tissue lining the abdomen). He had to have further surgery when he developed complications including kidney problems and a haematoma (a localised collection of blood outside the blood vessels). Three months after the original appendectomy he developed a fistula (an abnormal opening between organs) which had to be closed with a skin graft.

Mr C complained to us that the GP failed to diagnose that he was suffering from appendicitis. We took independent advice on this from one of our medical advisers, and did not uphold the complaint. The adviser said that the GP had made a reasonable assessment and diagnosis of Mr C's symptoms, which were highly suggestive of gastroenteritis. The GP had asked Mr C to return to be reviewed if his symptoms did not settle down, but he did not do this. Our adviser pointed out that there is a shared responsibility between doctor and patient, and it was not the doctor's responsibility that Mr C did not return when his symptoms did not improve.