

SPSO decision report

Case: 201400247, Forth Valley NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C, who is a prisoner, told us that he suffered from severe pain that restricted his ability to leave his cell. He said that gabapentin (pain-killing medication) had been effective in controlling this and complained that the prison health centre had stopped his prescription for it and prescribed various alternative medications. He said these had not helped with his pain and had in fact made him more unwell. He acknowledged that there were security implications about having gabapentin in the prison environment but said that he was prepared to take it under supervision.

We took independent advice on this complaint from one of our medical advisers, who is a GP. After reading Mr C's medical records, he said that there was evidence, from these and by Mr C's own admission, of him misusing medication and sourcing drugs from other prisoners. The adviser explained that, as well as the security implications, this dramatically increased the risk of drug interactions which could, in some cases, be fatal. He noted that it was important for there to be trust between the patient and doctor before a drug with dangerous side effects and the potential for abuse could reasonably be prescribed. In addition, he said Mr C was potentially suffering from the recognised side effects of gabapentin and that he was participating in a methadone programme, on which it was important to allow doctors to remove any medications they felt he should not continue. In the circumstances, we found that it was reasonable that the doctors discontinued the prescription.