

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201401164, Tayside NHS Board  
**Sector:** health  
**Subject:** clinical treatment / diagnosis  
**Outcome:** not upheld, no recommendations

### Summary

Mrs C complained that the board failed to diagnose her with rheumatoid arthritis while she was under their care. Although she had a number of appointments in just over a year, Mrs C was only diagnosed with this after she moved out of Scotland.. She said that this was despite the fact that there had been sufficient indicators present to have confirmed this. She said that, as a consequence, she was not properly treated and that she had subsequently lost her independence.

We investigated the complaint and took independent advice from a consultant rheumatologist. Our adviser said that diagnosing rheumatoid arthritis is neither straightforward nor easy and other conditions can mimic its presentation. Accordingly, great care has to be taken in making a diagnosis, and also in prescribing appropriate drugs, some of which have significant side-effects. We found that in the time period about which Mrs C was concerned, and faced with a complicated picture, clinicians responsible for her care had carefully monitored her, formed appropriate working diagnoses and treated her appropriately. At about the same time as Mrs C moved, the evidence about her condition became much clearer and the findings and updated treatment were summarised to her new clinician when her treatment recommenced.