

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201406009, A Medical Practice in the Lanarkshire NHS Board area  
**Sector:** health  
**Subject:** clinical treatment / diagnosis  
**Outcome:** not upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mrs C's mother (Mrs A) had a distended abdomen and her GP arranged tests for her. Mrs A made an appointment, as requested, to discuss the test results with the GP, and Mrs C said that at the consultation her mother was shocked to be told that she had ovarian and bowel cancer and was given details of the sort of treatment that was available. Mrs C complained to us that the medical practice should have warned her mother she was to be given bad news, so she could take a family member with her.

We took independent medical advice from an adviser who is a GP, who said that it was not for reception staff to interpret test results. We also considered Mrs A's GP's explanation to be reasonable, in that he said Mrs A knew what the tests were for and that it would have been for her to decide if she wanted to bring someone with her to her consultation. We did not uphold this part of the complaint.

Mrs C also complained about the consultation itself. Subsequently, it turned out that her mother did not have cancer, and Mrs C said the GP had jumped to the conclusion that her mother had bowel and ovarian cancer, based on inadequate information.

We considered the GP had been thorough in trying to establish whether Mrs A had cancer. However, our adviser considered that, strictly speaking, the GP could be considered to have acted prematurely in arranging blood tests and in arranging a scan at the same time as the blood tests, as clinical guidance suggested a different approach. We also found the GP had used a test which was not indicated in the diagnosis of bowel cancer. There was no evidence that he had told Mrs A she had cancer, other than indicating that some of the test results raised the possibility of ovarian cancer and should be investigated further. On balance, we considered that the GP had acted reasonably and we did not uphold this part of the complaint. However, we did recommend that the GP review the relevant NHS guidance as a learning opportunity, to help guide his approach in any future cases.

Finally, Mrs C complained about a later meeting she and her mother had with the GP. We concluded that that meeting had been conducted reasonably and also did not uphold that part of the complaint.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the practice:

- ensure the GP reflects on relevant guidelines as a learning opportunity.