

SPSO decision report

Case: 201406833, A Medical Practice in the Grampian NHS Board area

Sector: health

Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis

Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained that the GPs at the practice had failed to provide adequate care to his wife (Mrs C) resulting in the late diagnosis of her pulmonary embolism (a clot in the blood vessel that transports blood from the heart to the lungs). Mr C said that this late diagnosis had led to subsequent serious health problems for Mrs C. He said she had repeatedly attended the practice with symptoms consistent with a pulmonary embolism, but that GPs had failed to refer her for the appropriate investigations. He added that on one occasion his wife had been asked to contact a hospital by herself, despite a dangerously elevated heart rate.

We obtained independent advice from an adviser on general practice medicine. They found that Mrs C was appropriately investigated initially. The advice also said that Mrs C's symptoms were non-specific and appeared to resolve for extended periods following treatment, so it was reasonable of the practice to have adopted a policy of watchful waiting. The advice noted that Mrs C's incidents of elevated heart rate were in fact in keeping with the monitored limits as defined by her pacemaker clinic and that it was, therefore, appropriate for her not to be referred as an emergency on that occasion.

We found that although Mr C had repeatedly referred to alternative medical opinion having been provided which supported his complaint, no attributed submissions were contained within his complaint. We found the actions of the practice were reasonable and appropriate, although we acknowledged the experience had been distressing for Mr C and his family.