

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201500087, A Medical Practice in the Lothian NHS Board area

**Sector:** health

**Subject:** clinical treatment / diagnosis

**Outcome:** not upheld, no recommendations

### Summary

Mrs C complained that GPs at the practice failed to provide her late husband (Mr C) with appropriate treatment over an eight month period. Mr C had reported symptoms of stomach pains and cramps and, despite changes to his diet and medication, the symptoms persisted. Eventually Mr C asked to be referred to a gastroenterologist (a doctor specialising in the treatment of conditions affecting the liver, intestine and pancreas) where it was diagnosed that he had a bowel blockage which turned out to be cancerous. The practice said that Mr C had shown signs of severe diverticulitis (a disease of the digestive system) for many years but had refused to give permission for investigations during that time. It was only recently that he had given permission for a referral to be made to hospital specialists who confirmed the diagnosis. Mrs C did not believe that the practice had sent reminder letters to Mr C and said that the practice should have followed this up.

We took independent advice from one of our GP advisers. We found that the practice had acted appropriately in that they had documented that they had advised Mr C of the risks should he fail to have further investigations carried out. They also explained what further investigations were required and that it was his decision whether or not to agree to the further investigations and that he should reconsider the options at regular intervals. The practice were not responsible for arranging the further investigations but would have referred Mr C to hospital specialists who would decide which further investigations were appropriate.