

SPSO decision report

Case: 201500956, Highland NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr and Mrs C complained to us that the board had failed to inform Mrs C of a diagnosis of diverticulitis (a common disease of the digestive system) that was reached when she had a colonoscopy (examination of the bowel with a camera on a flexible tube) under the Scottish bowel screening programme. Mrs C had undergone the colonoscopy following the detection of blood in samples she submitted under the bowel screening programme. During the colonoscopy, a minor non-cancerous growth had been removed and it was assumed that this had been the cause of the blood. The unit who carried out the colonoscopy wrote to Mrs C's GP practice to inform them of this. However, in the cover letter sent to the GP practice, they did not refer to a diagnosis of diverticulitis that had also been made during the colonoscopy. They also failed to inform Mrs C that she had also been diagnosed with diverticulitis at that time.

We took independent advice on Mrs C's complaint from a medical adviser who is a GP and from another medical adviser who is a consultant physician. Mrs C clearly should have been informed of the diagnosis of diverticulitis and we found that the unit who had carried out the colonoscopy should have made her aware of this. We considered that this problem originated from the lack of clarity in the board's procedures in relation to the Scottish bowel screening programme regarding sharing information with patients. We upheld the complaint, although we found that the board had already apologised to Mrs C for this.

Mr and Mrs C also complained that the board had failed to provide Mrs C with treatment for diverticulitis within a reasonable timescale. We found that it was unlikely that she required any treatment for this, although she should have been told to increase the fibre in her diet. We did not uphold this aspect of the complaint.

Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- consider adding further guidance about sharing information with the patient when they review their procedures in relation to the Scottish bowel screening programme.