

SPSO decision report

Case: 201507958, An Opticians in the Lanarkshire NHS Board area
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: not upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained to us about the care and treatment he had received from an opticians practice he attended with a problem in his left eye. He was examined by two optometrists at the practice. When he then phoned the practice again about the matter, they referred him to hospital, where a retinal detachment was diagnosed and surgery performed. Retinal detachment occurs when the thin lining at the back of the eye called the retina begins to pull away from the blood vessels that supply it with oxygen and nutrients. Without prompt treatment, it will lead to blindness in the affected eye. Mr C said that the sight loss he suffered in his left eye would not have been as severe had the optometrists referred him to hospital earlier.

We took independent optometry advice. We were unable to say for certain whether the retinal detachment was present on the two occasions Mr C attended the opticians. However, we found that the initial examination carried out when he attended the opticians was reasonable and appropriate according to the relevant guidelines. This would have offered a reasonable chance to detect whether retinal detachment was present at that time. When Mr C attended the opticians on the second occasion, his pupils were not dilated and the full set of relevant tests was not carried out. However, we found that this was reasonable as there was no evidence of increasing symptoms.

We did not uphold Mr C's complaint, as there was no clear evidence that he should have been referred to hospital earlier. However, there was no evidence that he was given an information leaflet about retinal detachment in line with both local and national guidance and we made a recommendation to the opticians in relation to this.

Recommendations

We recommended that the opticians:

- take steps to ensure that in appropriate cases, patients are provided with a retinal detachment warning leaflet.