

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201508051, Highland NHS Board  
**Sector:** health  
**Subject:** clinical treatment / diagnosis  
**Outcome:** not upheld, no recommendations

### Summary

Ms C complained on behalf of Miss A who said she suffered from Jarisch Herxheimer's reaction (a severe but treatable reaction to antibiotics). Miss A said doctors at Raigmore Hospital had failed to treat her properly by refusing to accept that she suffered from this condition and refusing to admit her to hospital for a week-long course of supervised antibiotics that would have demonstrated that her condition was genuine.

We took advice from a consultant in infectious disease medicine. The advice said the condition was normally found in patients being treated with antibiotics for a specific type of bacterial infection, such as syphilis or Lyme disease. Miss A had been tested for these and been found to be clear of infection. She had also been tested for latent tuberculosis. The advice said Miss A's doctors had eliminated any possible infections that might cause the condition when treated with antibiotics. It would not be appropriate to provide antibiotic treatment to a patient without an identified infection. This could lead to an increase in antibiotic resistance both in Miss A and the general population, reducing the effectiveness of future treatments. It would also put Miss A at risk of side effects including possible significant bowel disease.

We found that Miss A had been provided with a reasonable standard of care and treatment. While it was acknowledged that Miss A had suffered a very distressing experience, there was no medical evidence to show she suffered from Jarisch Herxheimer's reaction and we did not uphold the complaint.