

SPSO decision report

Case: 201508496, Highland NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained that the board unreasonably failed to provide appropriate clinical treatment following her decision not to agree to a lumbar puncture procedure (a procedure where a needle is inserted into the lower part of the spine to test for conditions affecting the brain, spinal cord or other parts of the nervous system).

Mrs C was referred to a neurologist at Raigmore Hospital as she was experiencing a range of neurological symptoms. The neurologist conducted an examination, but made no definite findings. Mrs C advised that she did not wish to have a lumbar puncture. A range of scans were subsequently performed, but no definitive diagnosis was reached. Mrs C was subsequently seen by a second neurologist, who again raised the possibility of the lumbar puncture. Further scans were performed, however no definite diagnosis was reached over the course of approximately one year.

Mrs C raised a number of concerns, including that she was repeatedly pressured to have the lumbar puncture, that blood tests were not performed timeously, and that she had received inconsistent information from the two neurologists about her condition and the results of scans. The board considered that the care and treatment provided had been appropriate.

We took independent advice from a neurologist. We did not find evidence in the medical records to suggest that the neurologists acted inappropriately in offering the lumbar puncture. We found it would have been good practice for the blood tests to have been performed, but noted this was usually done before a patient would be seen by a neurologist. We found that the information provided to Mrs C about the scans and her condition was of a reasonable standard, given the complexity of her case, and that there were different views among the radiologists who reviewed the scans. On balance, we did not uphold Mrs C's complaint.