

SPSO decision report

Case: 201508838, A Medical Practice in the Highland NHS Board area
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained about the care and treatment he received from the medical practice. In particular, he raised concerns about a specific consultation where he felt that he should have been referred to a psychiatrist due to him suffering from severe depression. He was not referred to psychiatry until around a year later and he considered this to have been to the detriment of his mental health in the interim period. He also complained that the practice had increased his dosage of antidepressant medication to what he considered to be an unsafe level.

We obtained independent medical advice from a GP. They noted that details of the consultation in question had not been recorded and they were, therefore, unable to assess whether a referral to psychiatry was indicated at that time. While they did not consider that there was any indication for a referral at subsequent consultations six and eight months later, due to the fluctuating nature of Mr C's mental health difficulties we could not conclude that the same applied at the time of the relevant consultation. With regard to Mr C's medication, the adviser noted that it was prescribed at dosages within recommended levels and they could find no evidence of unsafe prescribing.

In light of the identified record-keeping failure, we were unable to evidence that Mr C had been appropriately assessed and, in turn, whether the decision not to refer him to psychiatry was reasonable. Therefore, on balance, we upheld the complaint and made some recommendations to the practice relating to record-keeping.

Recommendations

We recommended that the practice:

- apologise to Mr C for the identified record-keeping failure; and
- reflect on the identified record-keeping failure and seek to ensure compliance with the relevant General Medical Council guidance at all times.