

SPSO decision report

Case: 201600319, A Medical Practice in the Lothian NHS Board area

Sector: health

Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis

Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained that he was not warned about the possible specific side effect of developing cataracts (a clouding of the lens of the eye leading to a reduction in vision) when taking steroid drugs via an inhaler.

Mr C had been treated by his GPs and specialists for a number of years for respiratory conditions. He was prescribed inhalers and nasal drops, some of which were steroids. Mr C was diagnosed with cataracts on both eyes while on holiday overseas and had surgery there to remove the cataract from one eye. He was told by his surgeon that the cataracts had been caused by his steroid inhaler.

We took independent medical advice and found that although recognised as a possible side effect, cataracts were such a rare occurrence that it was reasonable that this would not have been specifically discussed with Mr C. Information was available about this in the patient information leaflet supplied with each new batch of the drug. Our view, therefore, was that the actions of the practice were reasonable and in line with relevant General Medical Council guidance to GPs.