

SPSO decision report

Case: 201602169, A Medical Practice in the Orkney NHS Board area
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C, who works for an advocacy and support agency, complained on behalf of her client (Miss A). Ms C complained about the failure of GPs to follow up Miss A's abnormal blood results when she registered with the practice. Miss A had abnormal blood results when tested at her previous GP practice and as a result, she was diagnosed with hepatitis C (a virus that can infect and damage the liver, and can be transmitted to others through contact with infected blood) a number of years later. Miss A believed that had the practice kept the blood results under review when she moved into their area, the diagnosis of hepatitis C would have been made earlier and she would therefore not have suffered from other medical conditions.

The practice said that due to the passage of time, it was difficult to comment and that the GP who had seen Miss A had retired a number of years ago. The practice explained that there was a note that Miss A had had abnormal blood results at her previous practice but that the clinical picture was improving. However, they accepted that follow-up tests were not arranged. A GP had diagnosed that Miss A had Gilbert's syndrome (a genetic disorder where higher than normal levels of bilirubin, a substance found naturally in the blood, build up in the bloodstream causing jaundice).

We took independent advice and found that although there was an improvement in Miss A's condition initially, her blood results were still abnormal and that further tests should have been arranged by the practice. This had contributed to the delayed diagnosis of hepatitis C. We also found that although Miss A had abnormal blood results, her bilirubin level was not abnormal and as such the diagnosis of Gilbert's syndrome was not accurate.

Recommendations

We recommended that the practice:

- apologise to Miss A for the failings identified in this investigation.