

SPSO decision report

Case: 201605999, A Medical Practice in the Grampian NHS Board area
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained to us that the medical practice had failed to provide appropriate care and treatment to his late teenage daughter (Miss A). He said that Miss A had a lump on the side of her head which, over a couple of years, the doctors had said was a cyst. This turned out to be cancer.

Mr C felt that there had been a delay in reaching the diagnosis and that it was inappropriate that the practice had sent letters directly to his daughter about possibly removing the cyst at an earlier time. He said that he and his wife were not aware of the letters.

The practice responded that the presumption was that Miss A had a cyst, and that the option of removal under local anaesthetic was discussed. Miss A was given the opportunity to consider the excision along with the offer of a second opinion. When the cyst was noted to be increasing in size, Miss A was referred to hospital and cancer was diagnosed.

The practice explained that the diagnosis was unusual for a child of Miss A's age but that their investigation had identified a number of learning points.

We took independent GP advice. We found that based on the recorded evidence, there were no concerns about the way the GPs managed the situation. Initially there were no signs that the lump was sinister and the offer to have it removed was made. Miss A was competent to make the decision whether to have the lump removed at an earlier stage for cosmetic reasons rather than for clinical reasons and she decided not to have it removed. That was a reasonable decision for her and her parents to consider as her parents were involved in Miss A attending the practice at times. It was also reasonable for the practice to write directly to Miss A directly. We did not uphold Mr C's complaint.