

SPSO decision report

Case: 201700584, Lothian NHS Board - Acute Division

Sector: health

Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis

Decision: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained that the board unreasonably refused to support an out of area referral for a specialist neurosurgical assessment of his chronic migraines. Mr C suffered from chronic migraines for a number of years and had explored non-surgical treatment options but they did not help his situation. He wished to receive a professional opinion on surgical treatment options including occipital nerve stimulation (a procedure where a surgical implant is inserted near the occipital nerve - a nerve in the brain - which can be controlled by the patient to deliver electrical impulses with the aim of masking pain). However, this treatment is not available in Scotland. Mr C saw a consultant neurologist (a doctor who specialises in the brain and nervous system) in another Scottish health board area, who wrote a referral to a specialist centre in England. However, Mr C's consultant neurologist at his local board refused to support such a referral and funding was not approved. The board's view was that there was not a good evidence base for such interventions for patients with migraine. Mr C was unhappy with this response and brought his complaint to us.

We took independent advice from a professor of neurology with specialist expertise in headache disorders. We found that the board's decision was reasonable and was consistent with relevant guidance. Therefore, we did not uphold this complaint.