

SPSO decision report

Case: 201703356, A Medical Practice in the Tayside NHS Board area
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained on behalf of his late wife (Mrs A) about the care and treatment she received from her GP practice. Mrs A attended the practice with stomach pains but it was not until two years after her pain began that she was diagnosed with cholangiocarcinoma (CCA, a very rare cancer of the bile duct). Mr C complained that the practice had delayed in carrying out appropriate tests and investigations. The practice said that Mrs A had been treated and cared for reasonably. They explained the rarity of her illness and said that her symptoms had not been specific for a diagnosis of CCA. Mr C was unhappy with this response and brought his complaint to us.

We took independent advice from a GP. We found that, as well as Mrs A's illness being extremely rare, it was also very difficult to diagnose at an early stage and was often found incidentally. Mrs A initially attended the practice with abdominal pain for which she was appropriately treated. There was no indication at that time for further investigations and Mrs A noted an improvement. She did not return to the practice with abdominal pain until two years later. At this time, all her liver tests were normal; and showed no cause for concern. However, as her symptoms worsened, she was admitted to hospital and was diagnosed with CCA. We found that the care and treatment Mrs A received from the practice was reasonable and, therefore, we did not uphold this complaint.