

SPSO decision report

Case: 201800795, A Medical Practice in the Lanarkshire NHS Board area
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained to the practice about the lack of care provided to his late partner (Ms A). Ms A had attended the practice on numerous occasions over a four month period reporting continuing neck pain. The practice had diagnosed that Ms A was suffering from Polymyalgia Rheumatica (inflammation of the muscles in the neck, shoulder or hip) and prescribed painkillers. Ms A subsequently attended hospital due to the pain and a x-ray revealed she had neck fractures caused by lung cancer spreading through her body. Mr C felt there had been a delay in carrying out investigations which would have identified the cancer at an earlier time.

We took independent advice from a GP adviser. We found that, based on Ms A's presenting symptoms, it was not unreasonable that the practice followed a working diagnosis of Polymyalgia Rheumatica. They prescribed appropriate medication which was changed to an alternative when it did not alleviate the symptoms. There were no red flag signs which would have indicated the possibility of cancer or symptoms which warranted either a hospital admission or an urgent hospital referral for a specialist opinion from a respiratory clinician. We found that Ms A's cancer presented in an unusual manner and that the cancer could not have reasonably been diagnosed earlier. We did not uphold the complaint.