

SPSO decision report



Case: 201906036, A Medical Practice in the Grampian NHS Board area
Sector: Health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

C attended the practice with a growth on their face. When after initially being prescribed antibiotics the growth remained, the practice referred C to the local NHS board's plastic surgery department as a routine referral. C contacted the practice some months later as the growth had enlarged and C was experiencing other symptoms. The referral was upgraded to urgent and C was seen by the plastic surgery department shortly after. C was subsequently diagnosed with a malignant tumour and underwent further treatment by the board after the diagnosis.

C complained to the practice about the treatment that they received. C said that if the malignant tumour had been diagnosed sooner, then the treatment to remove the tumour would have been less invasive and impactful on their appearance. The practice responded via the local NHS board. Dissatisfied with the response, C brought the complaint to our office.

We took independent advice from a GP. We found that the practice's working diagnosis of a sebaceous cyst (a common non-cancerous cyst of the skin) was reasonable, with appropriate treatment provided, initially with antibiotics and, when the cyst remained, with a referral to the local NHS board's plastic surgery department. We considered that the skin cancer had presented atypically, and it was therefore reasonable that the practice initially considered the lesion to be a benign lesion, rather than an atypically presenting cancerous lesion. When it was reported that the lesion had grown and C was experiencing other symptoms, the practice reasonably escalated C's referral to urgent. We did not uphold the complaint.