

SPSO decision report

Case: 202000564, Tayside NHS Board
Sector: Health
Subject: Clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

C complained about the care and treatment they received from the board. C experienced pain and discomfort when eating and suffered from gastro-oesophageal reflux (stomach acid travelling up towards the throat). C's gastroenterologist (a physician who specialises in the diagnosis and treatment of disorders of the stomach and intestines) ordered a barium swallow test (BST, a special type of X-ray test where barium is swallowed which shows up clearly on an x-ray to help diagnose problems with swallowing and the oesophagus). The radiologist (a doctor who specialises in diagnosing and treating disease and injury through the use of medical imaging techniques such as x-rays and other scans) who reviewed the images reported them as normal. C complained about the care and treatment provided by the gastroenterologist and the radiologist's interpretation of the BST.

We took independent advice from a consultant radiologist and a consultant gastroenterologist. We found that there were small osteophytes (bony lumps that grow on the bones of the spine or around the joints) in the spine on the BST images. However, these were small and insignificant. We found that images had been thoroughly reviewed by the radiologists and that there was no demonstrable compression of or leakage from the oesophagus. We also considered that the suggestion to change C's medications was reasonable and good clinical practice. The BST showed that no further investigations were required. Therefore, we did not uphold this aspect of C's complaint.

C also complained about how the board responded to their complaint. We found that the complaint response may not have been as in depth as C would have preferred, and that the conclusions of the medical staff were not what C was hoping for, however that did not mean the response was unreasonable. There was a delay in providing a complaint response to C, however we found that these were caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and from a further submission of information by C. We found these explanations to be reasonable and did not uphold this aspect of C's complaint.