

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201305012, A Medical Practice in the Dumfries and Galloway NHS Board area  
**Sector:** health  
**Subject:** clinical treatment / diagnosis  
**Outcome:** not upheld, no recommendations

### Summary

Mrs C's father (Mr A) had suffered from a painful degenerative condition that caused his spinal cord to become compressed. An operation was carried out and, after a difficult recovery, Mr A was pain free for a number of months. He then began to have new pain in his shoulder and went to his GP as he was worried that this could have been a recurrence of the condition. Mr A's GP considered that he did not have any new symptoms that indicated his spinal cord was compressed. Mr A had a number of consultations over the following months where the GP adjusted his pain relief medication. He also attended hospital appointments which clinicians reported to the GP; none of them considered that he was suffering from spinal cord compression. Mr A was subsequently seen at home by the GP as he was in too much pain to visit the surgery. The GP made a referral for a scan which was carried out a few days later. The scan showed a narrowing of the spinal canal and an urgent referral was made.

Mrs C complained that the GP repeatedly failed to diagnose her father's condition, delayed referring him for a scan and had not assisted him in obtaining medical equipment to help him manage at home. The practice responded saying that the GP had acted appropriately.

After taking independent advice from one of our medical advisers, we found that the GP had provided Mr A with reasonable care and treatment. Our adviser explained that there was no evidence that Mr A was suffering from new spinal cord compression and so there was nothing to suggest that a scan should have been carried out earlier. In relation to obtaining medical equipment for use at home, our adviser said that the occupational therapy department would deal with this rather than the GP. As the GP had advised Mrs C's family to contact the occupational therapy department, we considered that this had been handled reasonably.