

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201305982, A Medical Practice in the Fife NHS Board area

**Sector:** health

**Subject:** clinical treatment / diagnosis

**Outcome:** some upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mrs A registered with the medical practice when she moved into a care home. She had several ongoing medical conditions and was seen by GPs from the practice on a number of occasions. A number of months after moving into the care home, Mrs A became quiet and was not drinking enough fluids. Staff contacted the practice and were advised to keep her under close observation. A call back was arranged for a short time later at which time the care home staff reported that Mrs A was much better and was drinking fluids. As they also advised the practice that Mrs A had very strong, foul smelling urine, an antibiotic was prescribed to treat any underlying infection. Later that night, however, Mrs A's condition deteriorated and she was admitted to hospital later that night. She died some days later.

Mrs A's daughter (Mrs C) complained that the GPs had not provided Mrs A with appropriate medical care while she was resident at the care home. In considering this complaint, we took independent advice from one of our medical advisers, who is a GP. Having reviewed Mrs A's medical records, our adviser said that she had received reasonable care and treatment from the practice. The GPs had reviewed and amended her medication, referred her to specialists in old age psychiatry and speech and language therapy, and responded to requests for advice from the care home staff as well as monitoring her general health. We did not uphold this complaint.

However, Mrs C also complained that the practice took too long to respond to her complaint. We reviewed their complaints handling procedure and agreed that the complaint had not been dealt with within their published timescales. We also noted that their complaints handling procedure had not been updated to reflect the introduction of new legislation, so we upheld this complaint and made recommendations.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the practice:

- apologise to Mrs C for failing to respond to her complaint in a timely manner; and
- update their complaints handling procedure.