

SPSO decision report

Case: 201502996, A Medical Practice in the Ayrshire and Arran NHS Board area
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: not upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained about the care and treatment provided by the practice. Mrs C raised concerns that the practice did not provide a reasonable standard of care when she presented with symptoms of bowel discomfort and diarrhoea over a period of several months. In particular, she was concerned the practice failed to diagnose her colonic cancer at an early stage. Mrs C also raised concerns about timeliness of blood tests, the antibiotics prescribed, and her concerns that the practice was dismissive of her symptoms. She also complained the practice unreasonably failed to provide a letter of referral she asked for in order to arrange a private scan.

The practice said that Mrs C's treatment had been reasonable. In particular, they noted that Mrs C had attended a colonoscopy (an examination of the bowel with a camera on a flexible tube) two months prior to the period in question, which had shown no signs of cancer, but provided an alternative explanation, which was consistent with her symptoms. The practice said that the GP in question understood Mrs C had requested a scan, and had arranged appropriate investigations.

After receiving independent advice from a GP, we did not uphold Mrs C's complaint. We found that the practice had acted reasonably in the circumstances, based on the result of the colonoscopy, the alternative diagnosis, and the nature of the symptoms Mrs C experienced. We also considered that the practice provided appropriate care and treatment in relation to blood tests, prescription of antibiotics, and was responsive to her symptoms. We also considered the actions of the practice in relation to the scan were reasonable in the circumstances.

During the course of our investigation, we noted aspects of the practice's complaints procedure did not comply with the Scottish Government's 'Can I help you?' guidance, so although we did not uphold the complaint, we made a recommendation about this.

Recommendations

We recommended that the practice:

- review their procedure to ensure that it reflects the requirements of the Scottish Government's 'Can I help you?' guidance.