

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201503185, A Medical Practice in the Tayside NHS Board area  
**Sector:** health  
**Subject:** clinical treatment / diagnosis  
**Outcome:** not upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mrs C complained that the practice failed to take her late husband (Mr C)'s symptoms seriously between January and March 2014, in particular his weight loss. She also said that they were given inaccurate information about the length of time Mr C would be admitted to a hospice.

We took independent advice from a general practitioner and we found that Mr C had a history of back pain and diabetes, and in 2013 had been given advice about his diet. He lost weight as a consequence and, when he went to the GP a few months later suffering from leg pain, it was noted that he was still losing weight but this was considered to be because of his healthier diet. Nevertheless, Mr C's pain was investigated: blood tests were taken, he was referred for physiotherapy and an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) scan of his back was carried out. Mr C's blood tests showed an abnormality, and he was, therefore, referred to hospital where he was later diagnosed with cancer. Mr C's pain was very difficult to control and he was admitted to a hospice on two occasions. On the second occasion, Mrs C felt that she had been misled as it was indicated his stay would only be short. However, because of the complexity of his needs, it took a considerable time to provide a solution to his pain.

We acknowledged that Mrs C had coped with a very stressful situation but we did not uphold her complaint. However, as we found that Mr C's referral to hospital should have been an urgent one (because of the presence of weight loss), we made a recommendation for the practice to familiarise themselves with appropriate guidance.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the practice:

- ensure that GPs in the practice familiarise themselves with the appropriate guidance and discuss this as a learning point.