

SPSO decision report

Case: 201601311, Tayside NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained to the board about the care and treatment provided to her mother (Mrs A) by her GP practice. In particular, Mrs C felt that the practice failed to arrange appropriate investigations in view of the symptoms Mrs A presented with.

Mrs A attended the practice on a number of occasions over a two year period, and presented with symptoms including abdominal pain, vomiting and weight loss. After Mrs A's condition did not improve following an out-of-hours GP assessment, she was admitted to hospital. Several tests were performed during this admission and further tests were carried out in the months following discharge. Following these investigations, Mrs A was diagnosed with gastric cancer and she died a number of months following this diagnosis.

In response to our enquiries, the board provided a copy of a review that they had undertaken. Within the review, the board noted that Mrs A had complained of a number of symptoms, yet on each occasion Mrs A's symptoms could have been explained by non-cancer related causes. The board also noted that Mrs A's weight was relatively stable and various blood tests did not suggest anything sinister, with no evidence of anaemia or other worrying findings. The board concluded that the recorded symptoms did not suggest that a referral for gastroenterology investigation was indicated in accordance with local protocols.

We took independent advice on the case from a GP adviser. Having reviewed the records, the adviser did not consider that the practice had failed to take appropriate action in view of Mrs A's symptoms, and did not find that Mrs A's symptoms should have alerted the practice to a likely diagnosis of gastric cancer. The adviser concluded that the practice provided Mrs A with reasonable care. We accepted the adviser's comments, and for this reason we did not uphold this complaint.