

SPSO decision report

Case: 201605426, A Medical Practice in the Grampian NHS Board area
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C complained that GPs at her medical practice had misdiagnosed her after she attended several appointments complaining of earache. Ms C was later found to have chronic tonsillitis. She complained that the GPs had not diagnosed this when she presented with her symptoms. She also complained that she was not prescribed anything for her pain during this period.

We took independent medical advice and found that the GPs assessed and treated Ms C appropriately and in line with her symptoms. An appropriate referral had been made to the ear, nose and throat department. In relation to the matter of pain relief, the practice pointed out that Ms C was already on a number of strong painkillers for other conditions.

Ms C complained that the practice's handling of her complaint was unreasonable. We found that their response to her complaint was not professional and lacked objectivity. We upheld this aspect of the complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- The practice should apologise to Ms C for the poor quality of the written response to her complaint. The apology should comply with SPSO's 'Guidance on Apology', available at www.spsso.org.uk/leaflets-and-guidance.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- Responses to complaints should use professional and objective language, demonstrating an understanding of the complainant's position and taking into account the practice's responsibilities within the NHS Complaints Handling Procedure.

We have asked the organisation to provide us with evidence that they have implemented the recommendations we have made on this case by the deadline we set.