

SPSO decision report

Case: 202110925, A Medical Practice in the Lanarkshire NHS Board
Sector: Health
Subject: Clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: upheld, no recommendations

Summary

C complained that the practice failed to provide a face to face appointment to their late spouse (A) which contributed to a delay in onward referral, and ultimately delayed diagnosis of amyloidosis (a condition in which amyloid proteins build up on organs like heart, kidney and liver).

A had multiple telephone consultations with their GP over the year, presenting with varying symptoms. C complained that the frequency with which A presented should have prompted a face to face appointment. The practice response stated that it was not common practice to offer face to face assessment during the COVID-19 pandemic and that A had not requested a face to face appointment

We took independent medical advice from a GP adviser. We found that the practice's failure to offer a face to face appointment was not reasonable. The frequency with which A presented and the symptoms that they described should have been identified as 'red flags' which triggered a face to face appointment and onward referral for specialist investigation, regardless of COVID-19 restrictions in place at the time. Therefore, we upheld this complaint.

We noted that the practice had already reflected extensively on their management of A, demonstrated learning and things that they would do differently in future, and offered apology to C. As such, we made no further recommendations.