

## SPSO decision report



**Case:** 202302300, A Medical Practice in the Grampian NHS Board area  
**Sector:** Health  
**Subject:** Clinical treatment / diagnosis  
**Decision:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

C complained that the practice failed to adequately investigate and/or diagnose the cause of their persistent cough. C was subsequently hospitalised and diagnosed with pneumonia while on holiday.

The practice did not uphold C's complaint. They said that they had taken reasonable action in light of C's presenting symptoms and that C's cough had been reasonably treated. They said that C's final examination was normal and not in keeping with a diagnosis of pneumonia and that, therefore, there was no missed diagnosis.

C remained unhappy and asked us to investigate. We took independent advice from a GP. We found that there had been a failure to adequately investigate the cause of C's cough. In light of C's presenting symptoms, a persistent cough and infection, we found that an in person appointment and an urgent referral for a chest x-ray should have been considered after their initial telephone presentation. We also considered that C should have been referred for an urgent chest x-ray following a second presentation, in accordance with the Scottish Referral Guidelines for Suspected Cancer. Therefore, we upheld C's complaint.

### Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for the failure to adequately investigate the cause of their persistent cough. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at [www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets](http://www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets).

What we said should change to put things right in future:

- Patient treatment should be considered in line with relevant guidance.