

SPSO decision report

Case: 201300371, A Medical Practice in the Lanarkshire NHS Board area
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Ms C, who is an advice worker, complained on behalf of her client (Miss A) that the medical practice unreasonably failed to investigate Miss A's reported symptoms and make timely and appropriate referrals. Ms C also complained that when a referral was made, it was marked as routine, rather than urgent.

Miss A had suffered for a number of years with a condition causing discomfort and pain in her joints, for which she had received various treatments and referrals, including physiotherapy. Since January 2012, however, she had also been reporting a lump and pain in her right groin and felt that physiotherapy was making matters worse. Her GP then referred her to a specialist physiotherapist who in turn referred her to an orthopaedic surgeon (dealing with conditions of the musculoskeletal system). After tests and examinations, the orthopaedic surgeon referred Miss A to a bone cancer specialist. Miss A was then diagnosed with chondrosarcoma (cancer of the cartilage) with an overlying osteochondroma (a benign (not progressive or destructive) bone tumour). Miss A has since had successful treatment.

Our investigation, which included taking independent advice from one of our medical advisers, found that the GPs had acted reasonably in referring Miss A for physiotherapy for her pre-existing condition. We also found that when she reported the lump in her groin that she thought was increasing in size, appropriate and timely referral was made. The adviser said that the osteochondroma was masking the more aggressive and serious chondrosarcoma so that it was not unreasonable for the GP to have made a routine, rather than urgent referral. The adviser said that overall the care and treatment provided to Miss A was reasonable, and we did not uphold this complaint.