

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201302141, Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board - Acute Services Division  
**Sector:** health  
**Subject:** clinical treatment / diagnosis  
**Outcome:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mrs C complained on behalf of the family of her late aunt (Mrs A) that the care and treatment Mrs A was given whilst she was in the care of the board was unreasonable. Mrs A had died after being diagnosed with a form of cancer, which it had taken some time to identify. Mrs C said that because of this, her aunt suffered more than she should have done, and wanted to know why tests had failed to detect her condition earlier.

We considered all the complaints correspondence and Mrs A's medical records, and obtained independent advice from one of our medical advisers on the care and treatment provided. Our investigation found that Mrs A's illness was complicated and very difficult to diagnose. Doctors were considering three possible diagnoses, which were also rare. While it was reasonable for them to explore and treat the possibility of tuberculosis (which was initially considered), we concluded that insufficient acknowledgement had been given to irregularities that had been found. A scan had confirmed a mass that could be felt, and two colonic investigations (examinations of the bowel) had failed to reach a particular part of it. No single doctor took the lead in Mrs A's case, which was not ideal. In the circumstances, we upheld the complaint, as we concluded that there was a missed opportunity to make an earlier diagnosis. While this may not have affected the outcome, it might have allowed an extension to Mrs A's terminal care.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- apologise to Mrs C for the failings identified in this complaint;
- review the circumstances of Mrs A's case and put in place processes to ensure that lead responsibility is taken for progressing a diagnosis; and
- ensure that those clinicians involved in Mrs A's case are made aware of these findings so that they can take forward the learning from it.