

SPSO decision report

Case: 201305451, Lothian NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C, who is a prisoner, complained that prison doctors refused to prescribe him tramadol for his back pain. He said he had previously been prescribed this by his community GP. The prison doctors prescribed alternative medication, which Mr C said was not effective in controlling his pain.

We took independent advice on this complaint from one of our medical advisers, who is a GP. He told us that strong opiates (morphine related drugs) like high dose tramadol should only ever be used on a short term basis for lower back pain. He noted that the recent re-classification of tramadol to a higher category reflected the concerns that doctors have had for some time about the drug, its potential side effects and its potential to be abused. In the circumstances, he considered that the prison doctors had acted reasonably in offering Mr C alternatives to tramadol. We accepted this advice and did not uphold the complaint.