

SPSO decision report

Case: 201502795, Grampian NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C suffered from cystic acne. He attended his GP practice on a number of occasions over several years and received treatment. Eventually he was referred to a skin specialist. The specialist prescribed Mr C medication that cleared his acne, but he was left with significant scarring on his face. He complained that, when he asked the board to provide treatment to remove the scarring, this was refused on the grounds that it was a cosmetic procedure and could not be funded by the NHS. Mr C felt that the NHS should provide the required treatment.

We found that the board had reached their decision with reference to national guidance on referrals for cosmetic procedures. Although acne was not specifically mentioned in the guidance, we were not critical of its use when considering Mr C's request for treatment. The guidance generally ruled out treatment unless there were special circumstances. We took independent advice from a consultant dermatologist (a specialist in diseases of the skin, hair and nails). The adviser said that the board had appropriately considered Mr C's request and, should he wish to pursue a referral on the grounds of special circumstances, he would have to do this through his GP. We were not critical of the board's handling of Mr C's case.