

SPSO decision report

Case: 201700036, Lothian NHS Board - Acute Division
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained to us about the failure of staff at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh to identify that he had sustained a fracture of his spine after a fall at home. It was only when Mr C attended an appointment with a clinician six months later that he was told about the fracture. Mr C wanted to know why the fracture was not identified sooner as this would have allowed him to receive additional treatment.

We took independent advice on Mr C's complaint from an adviser in emergency department medicine and an adviser in radiology. We found that the imaging which was carried out when Mr C attended the hospital immediately after his fall showed subtle signs of a fracture of Mr C's spine. However, this was with the benefit of hindsight. We concluded that, due to the subtle findings which were evident, it was not unreasonable for the staff who reviewed the imaging at that time not to have identified the fracture. We did not uphold the complaint.