

SPSO decision report

Case: 201810143, A Medical Practice in the Lothian NHS Board area
Sector: Health
Subject: Clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

C was a patient of the practice for a number of years where they were treated for thyroid (a gland in the front inside area of the neck) problems and anaemia (a deficiency in the number or quality of red blood cells in the body). C began to experience changes in their behaviour. Following an incident, the police and social work became involved and C was admitted to hospital. C was discharged the following day after a psychiatric assessment. However, C subsequently had to attend court. When gathering information for their court appearance, C obtained a copy of their medical records from the practice. Upon reviewing these, C considered that there had been failures to diagnose deficiencies of vitamin B12 and vitamin D. C also considered that there had been issues with the practice's management of their anaemia and thyroid problems and the long-term prescription of a proton-pump inhibitor (a class of medications that cause a profound and prolonged reduction of stomach acid production).

C submitted a formal complaint to the practice regarding their care and treatment and their handling of C's medical records. C said that, whilst the practice responded to their concerns about the medical records, they did not address the complaints about C's care and treatment due to the time that had passed.

We took independent advice from a GP. We found that, whilst C did have some abnormalities in their blood tests, these were relatively minor and would not have caused the behavioural changes C experienced. We found that the long-term proton-pump inhibitor prescription was reasonable and that C's thyroid problem was routinely monitored and managed. We found that the practice failed to notify C of their low vitamin D results, but concluded that the implications of this oversight were minimal. We did not uphold this aspect of C's complaint.

With regard to the practice's handling of C's complaint, we found that that their decision to rule the complaint as outwith the time limit was reasonable in the circumstances and in line with their complaints handling procedure. We did not uphold this aspect of C's complaint.