

Scottish Parliament Region: Central Scotland

Case 200600295: A GP, Forth Valley NHS Board

Summary of Investigation

Category

Health: GP; Diagnosis and treatment

Overview

The complainant (Mr C) complained that his GP failed to diagnose and treat him appropriately.

Specific complaint and conclusion

The complaint which has been investigated is that Mr C's GP failed to diagnose and treat his sexually transmitted infection (*not upheld*).

Redress and Recommendations

The Ombudsman has no recommendations to make.

Main Investigation Report

Introduction

1. On 25 January 2006 Mr C complained through his MSP to Forth Valley NHS Board (the Board). Mr C considered that his GP had failed to treat him adequately over the previous 20 years, in that he had failed to recognise the symptoms of a sexually transmitted disease. Mr C had since been treated for the condition and was much improved but felt that, as his GP had not dealt with the problem earlier, he had suffered unnecessarily.
2. In the absence of the Chief Executive, the Director of Nursing of the Board replied to Mr C on 20 February 2006. She explained the diagnosis and treatment which Mr C had received.
3. On 12 April 2006 Mr C attended a meeting with the Director of Nursing, the Medical Director and the Patient Relations Officer but Mr C remained dissatisfied and, on 25 April 2006, he complained to the Ombudsman.
4. The complaint from Mr C which I have investigated is that Mr C's GP failed to diagnose and treat his sexually transmitted infection.

Investigation

5. In order to investigate Mr C's complaint I have had access to Mr C's GP records, Mr C's hospital records in relation to this matter and the NHS complaints file. I have obtained and accepted clinical advice from a professional adviser. My report is based on the advice I have received.
6. I have not included in this report every detail investigated but I am satisfied that no matter of significance has been overlooked. Mr C and the GP Practice were given an opportunity to comment on a draft of this report.

Complaint: Mr C's GP failed to diagnose and treat his sexually transmitted infection

7. Mr C said that he had suffered from a sexually transmitted disease for over 20 years because his GP had failed to diagnose and treat it appropriately.

8. Mr C's GP records start in 1962. From these records, the first time that Mr C mentioned to his GP any symptom related to his urinary tract was on 17 March 2004. The entry states that Mr C complained of dysuria (pain in the act of passing urine) and hesitancy (some difficulty in passing urine – often the body's response to the pain of doing so). The GP made a provisional diagnosis of a UTI (urinary tract infection) and prescribed an antibiotic. Mr C told his GP that he was concerned that he might have an STI (sexually transmitted infection). The GP supplied Mr C with the telephone number of the GUM (Department of Genitourinary Medicine) so that he could contact them for an appointment at their clinic.

9. The next entry by the GP is dated 9 April 2004 and states that Mr C had made an appointment at the GUM clinic.

10. The GUM clinic notes are dated 21 April 2004. They indicate that, from the information provided by Mr C, he was concerned that he had been exposed to infection some time previously. The notes record the investigations performed. An urethral swab was taken, a MSSU (midstream specimen of urine) taken, a swab taken (to check for Chlamydia infection - a common STI) and blood tests taken for sexually transmitted diseases. There are copies of the results of the tests in the records. Nothing was found in the urethral swab, the blood tests were negative, as was the swab for Chlamydia. The MSSU showed that a bacterium was present (*Escheria coli*). On receipt of these results, the clinic prescribed a different antibiotic on 26 April 2004 to treat the bacterial infection.

11. Mr C was seen at the clinic on 24 May 2004, where the records show he was back to normal. However, a further MSSU remained positive for bacterial infection so the clinic prescribed a third type of antibiotic.

12. When NHS Forth Valley investigated the complaint, the consultant in the GUM clinic said that when Mr C telephoned the clinic for his results after his first appointment he was told that he had a UTI, which would benefit from a different antibiotic from that prescribed by his GP. The consultant said that Mr C was also told that there was no evidence of an STI. Mr C then had a second course of antibiotics, and a further MSSU in mid-June showed no infection present. Mr C

was given this result by telephone on 21 June 2004 and was then discharged from the clinic.

13. I note that, at the meeting Mr C attended on 12 April 2006, he considered that if his clinical records from the GUM clinic did not indicate that he had a sexually transmitted disease then the records had been tampered with. I have asked an adviser to look at the records and there is no evidence that they have been tampered with.

14. The adviser said that, having made a diagnosis of a UTI, the GP prescribed an appropriate antibiotic. The adviser said that the GP's action in giving him the telephone number for the GUM clinic was the appropriate response to Mr C's concern that he had an STI. It was then for Mr C to telephone and make an appointment. The adviser said that is the normal method of accessing such clinics. The adviser said that, from the results of the tests, there is no evidence that Mr C ever suffered from an STI. He was diagnosed with a UTI and treated appropriately for that.

Conclusion

15. Mr C complained that, over a 20 year period, his GP failed to diagnose or treat a sexually transmitted infection. However, medical records show that Mr C did not in fact complain of relevant symptoms until 2004. When he did, the GP took appropriate action. Mr C also believes that he was at some point told by the GUM that he had an STI. However, there is no evidence that this happened and the medical adviser has confirmed that the records from GUM quite clearly show that Mr was not diagnosed there with such an infection. As there is no evidence that Mr C ever suffered from an STI, I do not uphold this complaint.

31 October 2006

Explanation of abbreviations used

Mr C	The complainant
GP	Mr C's General Practitioner
GUM	The open access clinic of the local hospital's Department of Genitourinary Medicine
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
UTI	Urinary Tract Infection
MSSU	Midstream specimen of urine
The Board	NHS Forth Valley