

**Failure to diagnose elderly woman with diabetes  
(12HDC00555, 4 December 2013)**

*General practitioner ~ Retirement village ~ Elevated glucose levels ~ Diabetes ~ Failure to diagnose ~ Failure to follow up test results ~ Failure to advise patient of test results ~ Documentation ~ Rights 4(1), 4(2), 6(1)(f)*

A man complained about the care provided to his elderly mother by a general practitioner (GP) and a retirement village. The woman was living in a serviced apartment at the retirement village, which did not offer rest home or hospital care facilities. The GP held weekly clinics at the retirement village.

The woman presented to the GP a number of times over a period of 20 months. The GP repeatedly ordered blood tests for the woman, the results of which indicated that she was at high risk of diabetes or glucose intolerance. The GP failed to appropriately follow up those results, or inform the woman of them. The woman's condition continued to deteriorate and she was hospitalised, at which point a diagnosis of diabetes was made.

It was held that the GP's repeated failure to manage the woman's elevated glucose levels appropriately, and to ensure that the abnormal tests were appropriately followed up, was extremely poor care and a breach of Right 4(1). His failure to inform the woman of the results of her tests was a breach of Right 6(1)(f). His record-keeping also fell below the expected standard, and was a breach of Right 4(2). The GP was referred to the Director of Proceedings for the purpose of deciding whether any proceedings should be taken. The Director of Proceedings laid a charge before the Health Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal. Professional misconduct was not made out.

The care provided to the woman by the retirement village was consistent with expected standards and was not a breach of the Code.