

Follow-up PSA testing
16HDC00508, 29 March 2018

*General practitioner ~ Medical centre ~ PSA levels ~ Monitoring ~ Further testing ~
Referral ~ Prostate cancer ~ Professional standards ~ Right 4(1)*

A man in his seventies had his prostate-specific antigen (PSA) level tested in June and August 2012 by his regular general practitioner (GP). After each of these tests the laboratory recorded that the man's PSA levels were high.

The man consulted his GP to discuss his elevated PSA levels. The GP examined the man's prostate and decided not to refer him for further urological review. Instead, the GP informed the man that she would test his PSA level in six months' time.

The GP did not take steps to make sure that a test was carried out in six months' time. The patient management system at the medical centre and its test results policy did not permit other doctors who had reviewed the man to be alerted that a lab test was due. Subsequently the man was diagnosed with prostate cancer with extensive widespread metastases.

Findings

The GP had a responsibility to take the necessary steps to retest the man's PSA level in six months' time as planned. By failing to do so, the GP did not provide services to the man with reasonable care and skill and, therefore, breached Right 4(1).

The medical centre was criticised because the patient management system it had in place, and its test results policy, did not permit other doctors who had reviewed the man to be alerted that a lab test was due.

Recommendations

It was recommended that the GP provide a written apology to the man's family.

It was recommended that the medical centre notify HDC of the dates of its test results audits for 2017, and provide the results of the audits to HDC.