

### Delayed diagnosis case study.

A delayed diagnosis by a medical profession of a medical condition can have serious irreversible consequences for an individual's health.

A delayed diagnosis of a 30-year-old woman's, Mrs X, medical condition, has caused life changing damage.

Mrs X was referred to an NHS Trust in 2016 by her GP, who believed that she was suffering with a frozen shoulder. Mrs X underwent an ultrasound scan of her shoulder and was advised that there was no sign of shoulder injury, but that she had some arthritis in her shoulder joint. It was recommended that she undergo physiotherapy.

Following an unrelated routine blood test, the following month, Mrs X's results showed that her inflammatory markers and CRP were raised.

A further month went by, and Mrs X attended the A&E department of the NHS Trust due to the pain continuing in her left shoulder. She underwent blood tests, ultrasound and an x-ray. She was diagnosed with a ruptured left bicep muscle.

Mrs X attended the Fracture Clinic a few weeks later. The diagnosis of a ruptured left bicep muscle was confirmed, and no surgical treatment was advised, but the recommendation was for Mrs X to continue with physiotherapy and for her to be seen by a surgeon with a special interest in upper limb disorders.

Several weeks passed and Mrs X was examined by a Consultant Orthopaedic, as her pain was increasing. On examination it was noted that a firm swelling was present over the biceps with the skin being red. She was treated with a steroid injection.

Over the next several weeks, Mrs X attended A&E on a number of occasions because of swelling, redness and pain in her left arm.

Mrs X was reviewed again by the Consultant Orthopaedic who, following another x-ray and MRI scan, diagnosed Mrs X with septic arthritis.

He apologised to Mrs X for the length of time it had taken to reach the correct diagnosis and that because of this the infection had caused irreversible damage to her bone, muscle and ligaments. Mrs X will suffer arthritis, pain and discomfort in her arm for the remainder of her life. Mrs X has now lost the use of her arm, which make even simple day to day tasks, such as getting dressed or making a cup of tea, extremely difficult without the assistance of a family member. Mrs X can no longer work or socialise and has been severely affected psychologically as a result.

Unfortunately, there is no treatment that will ever improve Mrs X's outcome.