



Administration  
Olympia Medical Center  
700 Lilly Road NE  
Olympia, WA 98506  
360-923-7010 phone  
1-800-565-1393 toll free  
360-923-7099 fax  
www.ghc.org

May 26, 2006

Ms. Elana Laham  
7104 Lindsey SE, #207  
Auburn, WA 98092

Re: Elana Laham  
Medical History Number 02841648

Dear Ms. Laham,

I am writing in response to your complaint regarding the care you received at the Tacoma Medical Center Urgent Care Department, the Federal Way Medical Clinic, and the Tacoma Medical Center Dermatology Department. You feel the physicians that treated you were incompetent. You informed the doctor that you are allergic to steroids, and later learned the doctor had prescribed them anyway. Your condition worsened because of the medication allergy. You stated that you experienced rude and unprofessional physician behavior. You have requested reimbursement for the costs of several of the medications you received. You have also requested a refund of five office visit copayments.

Your complaint is considered a grievance and is subject to Group Health's review process. You will be contacted as soon as Group Health's investigation has been completed.

Should you have any questions regarding this review, please contact me at 360-923-7092, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., or you can call the Group Health Customer Service toll free number 1-888-901-4636, TTY/TDD Relay (hearing impaired) 711 or 1-800-833-6388, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marsha Jordan-Gee".

Marsha Jordan-Gee  
Member Quality Coordinator  
Group Health Cooperative



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June 30, 2006

Ms. Elana Laham  
7104 Lindsey SE, #207  
Auburn, WA 98092

Re: Elana Laham  
Medical History Number 02841648

Dear Ms. Laham,

I am writing in response to the issues regarding the medical care and service you received at the Tacoma Medical Center Urgent Care Department, the Federal Way Medical Clinic, and the Tacoma Medical Center Dermatology Department. It is my understanding that you are dissatisfied because you said you informed the Urgent Care Physician, Dr. John Hoagland-Scher, that you were allergic to steroids. Later, you learned that Dr. Hoagland-Scher had prescribed a medication that contained steroids. You believed that your condition worsened because of an allergy to steroids. You were referred to Dr. Jill Rosenthal, Dermatology. You stated Dr. Rosenthal prescribed you a series of medications that did not make sense to you. You requested that information be placed in your medical record to indicate that you do not want steroids of any type. You said against your wishes, Dr. Rosenthal submitted information stating that you did not have an allergy or intolerance to steroids. You chose not to use any of the medications that the dermatologist prescribed. You decided the prescriptions were not applicable to your condition. You stated you experienced unprofessional physician comments by Dr. Matthew Quick, Primary Care, and Dr. Yun-Sun Choe, Urgent Care. Based on your concerns, you have requested reimbursement for the costs of several of the medications you received. You have also requested a refund of five office visit copayments, and a review of your care.

At Group Health, we are concerned when we hear that our care does not meet a patient's expectations. Dr. Ken Elam, Urgent Care Medical Chief, and Dr. Andrew Shors, Dermatology, conducted a review of your situation, and the issues you identified. The medical records were examined and the situation was discussed with the staff involved with your care. I now have the findings of the review and would like to share the information with you. Thank you for your patience during this process.

The findings of the review show you were seen at the Tacoma Medical Center Urgent Care, by Dr. John Hoagland-Scher on April 7, 2006. You were evaluated for a two week

- concern of an itchy enlarging lesion near the areola of your right breast. A scraping of the lesion was sent for a fungal culture, which was negative. Dr. Hoagland-Scher felt the lesion was likely tinea corporis (ringworm), and prescribed betamethasone-clotrimazole, which is an antifungal and a topical steroid combination cream. Dr. Hoagland-Scher instructed you to follow up with your primary care physician if you were not improving, or sooner if your condition worsened. Dr. Hoagland-Scher recalls his encounter with you specifically because you inquired about having the lesion removed. Dr. Hoagland-Scher explained removing the lesion would be inappropriate without first attempting medical treatment. Dr. Hoagland-Scher does not recall a conversation about an allergy to steroids or even a preference to avoid their use. On May 10, 2006, you were seen by Dr. Matthew Quick, Primary Care, for a rash on the right lateral breast. At that time Dr. Quick thought it might have been a reaction to the prescribed cream. The original lesion had improved significantly at that time. Dr. Quick recommended stopping the cream with follow up if the new redness did not resolve within a week or two. You presented to the Tacoma Medical Center Urgent Care on May 12, 2006. At that time you saw Dr. Yun-Sun Choe, for a new worsening rash under your breasts. Dr. Choe described the rash as moist and red. Dr. Choe felt this new rash was consistent with candidiasis (yeast) and prescribed miconazole cream twice daily. Dr. Quick saw you again in follow up on May 16, 2006. At that time the rashes were all improving, and your examination revealed fading of the right lateral breast eruption, and a fine rash under both breasts. Although the lesions were all improving, you remained quite concerned. Dr. Quick consulted with Dr. Jill Rosenthal, Dermatology. Dr. Rosenthal saw you the following day. Given the clinical appearance of the original lesion at the time of Dr. Rosenthal's examination of you, it is likely that the topical steroid, betamethasone, and not the antifungal agent clotrimazole, caused your improvement. It is not clear if any part of the redness on the side of the right breast was due to the topical steroid, or just mild eczema. Steroids can cause a topical allergic reaction, but they are generally very mild and not clinically noticeable. Steroids have a local immunosuppressive effect and block symptoms of allergy. Patch testing can determine allergies to certain subsets of topical steroids. There are four types of topical steroids A-D, and certain patients can rarely be allergic to one type. To list a patient as allergic to steroids is a great disservice to the patient, particularly if they need steroids in life threatening situations in the future. Steroids are natural compounds that are made by the body's adrenal glands daily, so that one never becomes allergic to all types of steroids.

- Antifungal creams do not treat allergic reactions. The prescription medication and the over the counter antibiotic ointment and moisturizer that Dr. Rosenthal recommended for you were specifically tailored to your condition and treatment preference. It is not clear that you had any type of reaction to the betamethasone-clotrimazole cream. However, if you did there is no evidence that it was either an allergy or intolerance to steroids. It is possible that the cream contributed to some temporary increase in the tiny blood vessels in the skin. This represents neither allergy nor intolerance but a normal temporary effect of topical steroids. It is agreed that all patients have the right to refuse steroids or any other treatment recommended by a physician or any other provider, as long as they understand the risks of refusal of treatment. It is clear from your letter that you believe

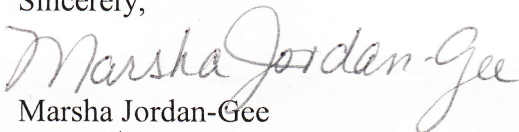
- you had an allergic reaction to the topical steroid cream. You are insisting that the statement "that you are allergic to steroids and therefore under no circumstance should be given any steroids" be placed in your medical chart. Because there is no evidence that you have an allergy to steroids, the statement as written will not be placed in your medical chart. The information notice (FYI) that you and your husband personally edited in the presence of Dr. Rosenthal's nurse, stating "patient prefers to avoid all steroids, topical and systemic. Had mild telangiectases after used betamethasone (this will resolve). Patient does not want steroids of any type. Patient had neither an allergy nor intolerance" will remain unless you specify otherwise. Your concern regarding the medical staff comments was forwarded to the appropriate supervisors. Any action taken is confidential and will not be shared with you.

• The medical review concluded the care you received was clinically appropriate. Based upon the findings of the review, Group Health Cooperative does not support your request for reimbursements.

• For your information, you have the right to request a reconsideration of this determination. If you disagree with the outcome of this quality of care review, you may ask for reconsideration by contacting me at 360-923-7092. I will arrange for a new review of the medical issues that you raise.

Thank you for writing to us about your issues. Your comments will help us improve the healthcare experience for our patients. If you have any questions or additional comments regarding this review, please contact me at 360-923-7092, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., or you can call the Group Health Customer Service toll free number 1-888-901-4636, TTY/TDD Relay (hearing impaired) 711 or 1-800-833-6388, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., and Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Sincerely,



Marsha Jordan-Gee  
Member Quality Coordinator  
Member Quality of Care Grievances  
Group Health Cooperative  
700 North Lilly Road  
Olympia, WA 98506