

SPSO decision report

Case: 201403197, A Dentist in the Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board area
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Miss C was concerned about a large lump in her mouth, and arranged an emergency dental appointment, where she was given antibiotics and advised to see her regular dentist. By the time Miss C saw her regular dentist a few days later her face was quite swollen. Miss C was advised by her regular dentist to have root canal treatment (RCT) on the infected tooth, noting that Miss C had started this treatment a year earlier but had cancelled the appointment to complete the treatment and not made another.

The dentist administered an anaesthetic to start the treatment, but this did not take effect, so asked Miss C to return the next day. When Miss C returned, the dentist administered the anaesthetic and started RCT. However, by the next day Miss C's face was extremely swollen and she was in considerable pain. She attended another emergency appointment and was immediately referred to hospital, where the tooth was removed and the abscess drained.

Miss C complained to us about the care and treatment she received. In particular, Miss C was concerned that the dentist did not take an x-ray, or attempt to remove the tooth or drain the abscess in her mouth.

After taking independent dental advice, we upheld Miss C's complaints. We found that the dentist should have attempted to drain the abscess, or referred Miss C on if she was not comfortable attempting this. We also found that the dentist should have taken an x-ray before starting RCT. Finally, we found that the dentist's record-keeping was not of a reasonable standard, as there was no proper description of the diagnosis or treatment plan.

Recommendations

We recommended that the dentist:

- issue a written apology to Miss C, acknowledging the failings our investigation found; and
- reflect on the findings of our investigation, as part of their on-going professional development.