

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201508376, Tayside NHS Board  
**Sector:** health  
**Subject:** clinical treatment / diagnosis  
**Outcome:** some upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Ms C, an advocacy and support worker, complained on behalf of Mr A about the care and treatment he received from the orthopaedic and physiotherapy departments at Ninewells Hospital after he fractured his fibula (shin bone). Mr A was unhappy that he was not given surgery at this time and that he was only discharged with crutches and pain relief with no follow-up appointment. Mr A continued to experience pain and self-referred to physiotherapy, which did not help his pain. He was dissatisfied that the physiotherapist did not query why his leg was not improving and he felt there was a missed opportunity to identify the lack of healing.

We took independent advice from two clinical advisers on the care and treatment Mr A received. We found that the orthopaedic care was reasonable and in keeping with this type of fracture. In addition, there was evidence that appropriate advice was given at the time Mr A was discharged from hospital. Although a follow-up appointment was not felt to be necessary, Mr A was informed at the time of discharge that he could contact the fracture clinic if he experienced any problems, which he did. We found that he was reviewed further and that the decision to continue conservative (non-surgical) management was appropriate. However, we were critical that there was poor communication between the orthopaedic ward staff and physiotherapy department prior to Mr A's discharge from hospital which meant that he was not reviewed by a physiotherapist. The board had apologised to Mr A but we made a further recommendation to ensure the matter does not recur.

We were also critical that the physiotherapy care Mr A received as an out-patient failed to document relevant factors in order to properly assess his calf pain. Therefore we upheld this complaint.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- inform us of the mechanisms in place to ensure effective communication between orthopaedic ward staff and the physiotherapy departments;
- ensure the physiotherapists involved in Mr A's care clearly record a patient's primary problem, a full subjective and objective patient history and the measurable outcomes; and
- apologise to Mr A for the failings identified in relation to the outpatient care he received for his calf pain.