

SPSO decision report

Case: 201507696, Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C complained that she had been referred to the Glasgow Dental Hospital for treatment for gum disease. Ms C had concerns about her treatment and, in particular, the failure to treat properly an abscess (a painful swelling caused by a build-up of puss) in her mouth. Ms C visited both the hospital and the board's out-of-hours service, but the problem was not properly diagnosed over several visits.

We took independent dental advice on Ms C's complaint. The adviser said that Ms C was treated correctly for the problem which had led to her referral to the hospital. However, the advice we received was that Ms C should have been x-rayed on her first attendance with an abscess. The failure to do this had prevented her abscess being properly diagnosed or treated. The adviser noted this was contrary to General Dental Council (GDC) guidance.

We therefore found that whilst Ms C's treatment plan was reasonable for her original dental problem, it was unreasonable for the board not to have followed the appropriate diagnostic guidance when she developed an abscess, so we upheld her complaint.

Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- review its procedures to ensure that patients presenting with abscesses or associated swelling receive x-rays in line with GDC guidance; and
- apologise for the failures identified in this case.