

Case: 201101039, Borders NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment; diagnosis
Outcome: some upheld, action taken by body to remedy, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C was on holiday when he sought treatment for a dental infection. He complained about the care and treatment provided by the board when he attended the emergency department at a hospital. Mr C explained to a member of staff that he was in a lot of pain, his face had become swollen, and that he was seeking antibiotics and painkillers. They told Mr C to contact NHS 24 as there was no dentist available to treat him.

Mr C spoke to a healthcare professional at NHS 24 who took some information and told him to return to the emergency department where he would be helped. However, on his return to the emergency department, Mr C said that he was told to leave and that NHS 24 would call him. However, they did not. Mr C received treatment from his own dentist when he returned home several days later.

Mr C complained that the board's failure to treat him was unacceptable given the dangers of an untreated infection, and that the board should have treated him with antibiotics and painkillers in the absence of a dentist. Mr C also complained that the board's response to his complaint was inadequate.

We took advice from our medical adviser, and found that communication failures led Mr C to leave the hospital, but that a consultation should have been arranged when he returned to the emergency department after his telephone call with NHS 24. The provision of simple pain relief and prescription of antibiotics, if required, would have been reasonable medical care. We told the board this, and upheld this complaint. However, as Mr C had already received an apology from the board and they had taken measures to try to prevent this happening again, we did not make any recommendations. We found that the board had considered and dealt with Mr C's complaint in line with NHS complaints procedures.