

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201406643, A Dentist in the Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board area  
**Sector:** health  
**Subject:** clinical treatment / diagnosis  
**Outcome:** some upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Miss C said she attended the practice for a check-up with the dentist and he removed a tooth which had been causing her pain for some time. She said she suffered extreme pain after the extraction and attended the practice again for an emergency appointment with the dentist. Miss C complained that the dentist unreasonably dismissed the pain she was feeling in her gum and unreasonably failed to notice and treat a hole in her gum. She also complained that the practice manager unreasonably failed to answer her questions about her treatment by the dentist in the practice's written response to her complaint.

We obtained independent dental advice on Miss C's complaint from a senior dental practitioner. Our adviser said Miss C's dentist reasonably diagnosed that Miss C had a dry socket (a well-recognised complication of tooth extraction, characterised by increasingly severe pain in and around the extraction site, usually starting 24 to 48 hours post-operatively) and treated it in line with the guidelines and established good practice – suggesting that the pain in her gum was not dismissed.

As we were not present at Miss C's appointment, it was not possible for us to say if there was a hole in her gum which the dentist then failed to treat. Given this and our adviser's view that the dentist's treatment of Miss C's condition was reasonable, we did not conclude that the dentist unreasonably failed to notice or treat a hole in Miss C's gum.

However, in terms of the complaints handling, we considered that on balance the practice manager's response did not address all the points Miss C made and was not a full response to her complaint. We were also concerned that the practice manager deemed Miss C's letter of complaint to be for information only and initially failed to issue a response, when the letter's contents indicated that a written response was required.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the dentist:

- feed back our decision on Miss C's complaint to the staff involved; and
- provide Miss C with a written apology for failing to provide a full response to her letter of complaint.