

SPSO decision report

Case: 201605430, A Dentist in the Forth Valley NHS Board area
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Miss C complained about the dental care and treatment provided to her after she was diagnosed with gum disease. She complained that the dentist did not offer to refer her to a specialist for treatment, and instead recommended that she have her teeth professionally cleaned every three months. Miss C also complained that the dentist had not taken x-rays to assess for bone loss in the four years since she was diagnosed with gum disease. Miss C felt that as a result of the dentist's ineffective treatment of her gum disease, her condition had become worse.

We took independent dental advice. We found that whilst the treatment provided by the dentist to Miss C was reasonable in some respects, we found that they had not offered Miss C the opportunity to see a specialist for her gum disease when she was first diagnosed. We also found that the dentist had failed to follow guidelines with regards to charting the progression of the gum disease. We further found that the dentist had failed to record basic periodontal examination (BPE) scores, which according to the relevant guidance should be recorded at every appointment. We also found that the dentist failed to follow good practice and take radiographs when Miss C's BPE score was four (any score of four or above is considered to require monitoring and/or treatment). On this basis, we upheld Miss C's complaint.

Miss C also complained that the dentist did not reasonably respond to her complaint. We found that the complaint response did not tell Miss C that she could bring her complaint to us if she remained dissatisfied. Therefore, we upheld this aspect of Miss C's complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Miss C for failing to provide her with appropriate dental care and treatment for her gum disease.
- Apologise to Miss C for failing to respond reasonably to her complaint.

What we said should change to put things right in future:

- When appropriate, offers to refer should be made. The offer and the response should be recorded.
- Charting should be carried out annually for patients who have undergone periodontal treatment.
- BPE scoring should be undertaken at least annually for all patients, in line with guidance.
- Radiographs should be taken for patients with a BPE score of four, in line with good practice.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- Complaint responses should include details for the SPSO.

We have asked the organisation to provide us with evidence that they have implemented the recommendations we have made on this case by the deadline we set.