

DENTAL APPOINTMENT GOES WRONG

The complainant attended a public dental clinic and claimed that the dentist did not x-ray her mouth prior to extracting a wisdom tooth. The extraction was very difficult and after the extraction she fainted. The complainant alleged that she was left in considerable pain after the procedure and had an unexpected, unexplained lump sticking out of her jaw. The complainant sought ongoing care with the clinic regarding the lump, but refused to see the initial dentist again.

A subsequent dentist had an OPG x-ray taken and it was decided that the complainant should be referred to the visiting oral surgeon. The complainant alleged that she was not given the details of the appointment with the visiting specialist, and as a result she missed the appointment. The complainant then went to a private provider at her cost and had the 'lump' treated successfully.

On receipt of this complaint, the Dental Board was advised (as per our joint protocol) and it was decided that the Board would enquire into the matters pertaining to the care provided by the initial dentist. The Commission then enquired into the issues surrounding the complainant's appointment with a visiting oral surgeon. The provider contended that the appointment was made in the complainant's presence and that she was aware of it. There was no conclusive proof either way.

A meeting was held, facilitated by the Commission, where the provider and the complainant had an opportunity to raise matters and seek a resolution to the complaint. The provider, while still maintaining that an appointment was made, offered to pay the complainant's costs which were incurred when a private dentist treated her jaw. The provider also advised that they were looking to install a computerised booking system in an effort to prevent similar disputes in the future. The Commission determined to take no further action, allowing the provider and complainant to negotiate the quantum of payment.