



Poor communication increased a dental patients fear and pain

We use people's stories to highlight problems, and encourage the NHS to change and improve its services.

Tell us your story today.

Healthwatch Calderdale was asked to find out about the experiences of Syrian refugees when they **try to access health services. This is one woman's story, which was told with the help of an interpreter...**

Mrs C lives in Halifax with her husband and has been having lots of problems with her teeth. She wanted the dentist to remove some broken teeth as the pain was stopping her from sleeping at night. *'I had severe toothache, all my teeth were in pain, so I asked for a dentist appointment but had to wait one month, but I was suffering now so just kept taking painkillers to reduce the pain. Then my supporter advised me not to take so many painkillers.'*

She felt comfortable when she went to the appointment as she had a supporter with her, but the dentist didn't know about her problems or understand what she was trying to say. *'I told the dentist I had lots of pain in my tooth and wanted her to take it out, but then instead of doing that she started cleaning all my teeth. I have really sensitive gums and she was hurting me a lot, so I caught her hand and pushed her away, and said I don't want you to complete the treatment. I didn't want to be aggressive, I just wanted to stop the pain. I was not annoyed; I knew the dentist didn't understand what was hurting me.'*

She went out without treatment and was told the next appointment was for the next month, but as she was in severe pain and couldn't even chew her food properly she said to her supporter, *'Please take me away from here, take me to the hospital instead and take off all my teeth, I don't want any teeth!'*

Her supporter couldn't speak Arabic so he couldn't explain what she was feeling to the dentist but he told her she needed an interpreter to help her understand the treatment she needed. Her support worker said *'She was distraught and in severe pain and stated that she wanted all her teeth out. At this point I complained to the practice manager regarding the seriousness of not providing interpreters and she acknowledged the complaint and stated that she would do her utmost to get an Arabic speaking interpreters for any future appointments.'*

What did this mean to Mrs C and the NHS...?

There was a basic lack of communication because an interpreter was not used

Mrs C suffered a great deal of pain and fear, and was not able to continue with the treatment when she really needed it

Thankfully her treatment is much better now, as when she needs anything doing to her teeth the dentist uses anaesthetic and attempts to get an interpreter.

Healthwatch Calderdale will contact Calderdale and Kirklees Local Dental Committee regarding this feedback to ask them how they plan to address the issues identified.



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