

# Dental patient negligence and malpractice: a case report and a literature review

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Dental malpractice and patient negligence are two different related issues. Both malpractice and patient negligence may be a consequence of dentists' lack of knowledge, experience or professional attitude and high workloads. In recent years the number of malpractice lawsuits against dentists has been increased.

**Objective:** The purpose of this study is to present a case report concerning dental malpractice and negligence and perform a review of the current literature.

**Case presentation:** A 52 year-old female patient was referred to the Department of Oral Diagnosis and Radiology, Dental School of Athens by her dentist after he had failed to treat her effectively. In particular, the patient visited her dentist 5 ago complaining of persistent and intense pain in the nasolabial line, the upper lip, the temporal area, the left ear and the floor of the orbit just above the left maxillary canine. Her dentist performed a panoramic x-ray and according to his diagnosis the upper left lateral incisor considered the cause of the pain due to an extensive dental composite restoration. The dentist proceeded in endodontic treatment of the responsible tooth. However, five months later the pain had not subsided and the patient was referred by her dentist to additionally perform, four additional radiographic examinations ( a Waters view radiography, a lateral cephalometric radiography, an Ultrasound and a Computed Tomography). After evaluating of the data accrue from the patients' complete and detailed medical history and the findings from the clinical and radiographic examination the diagnosis was an atypical neuralgia. So the patient was referred to a neurologist psychiatrist for further evaluation.

**Discussion:** In this case the dentist provided his patient with a treatment below what would normally be expected of an experience dentist. In particular he misdiagnosed the patients' problem, performed a wrong and unnecessary treatment and performed several inadequate radiographic examinations, exposing the patient in radiation unseemly. Dentists should always keep in mind that they should comply with the appropriate standards and protocols during practice. Moreover they are obligated to act in accordance with the laws of the country they practice and adhere to ethics.