



Overlooking a patient's communication needs led to delays in treatment

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

Mr A lives in Halifax with his wife, and has back problems causing him a lot of pain and greatly limiting his mobility. He was given an appointment to see a specialist at Calderdale Royal Hospital, but this appointment had to be cancelled when the interpreter who was supposed to have been there to help the doctor communicate with him did not attend.

Mr A said *'When I go to the GP and they speak politely I feel comfortable, but when I go to hospital and there is no interpreter, and they can't do anything, how should I feel? When someone gets severe pain and expects treatment, but doesn't get it, he feels very angry.'* Sometimes my Support Officer goes with me and helps at the GP and hospital, but he does not speak Syrian Arabic.'

When he attended the rearranged appointment there was still no interpreter present. Although his **support worker doesn't speak Syrian Arabic, he managed to help by speaking to the consultant, and then using Google Translate to explain the treatment Mr A was being referred for.**

His support worker said, *'I explained the difficulty he has with understanding English to the consultant, who then explained everything to me in regards to him requiring a small operation to remove a cyst. I then used Google translator to relay the information back to him.'*

What did this mean for Mr A and the NHS...?

There were delays to his treatment when he was experiencing severe pain

Time was wasted attending the cancelled appointment for Mr A and his support worker

There was the additional cost of a rearranged appointment with the consultant

The support worker was relied upon to provide translation via Google Translate

Healthwatch Calderdale will be contacting Calderdale and Huddersfield Foundation Trust regarding the feedback from this story to ask them how they plan to address the issues identified.



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