



# OUT-OF-HOURS HEALTHCARE AND MALPRACTICE COMPLAINTS

## BACKGROUND

In Denmark, general practitioners (GPs) provide out-of-hours care (OOH). Dissatisfied patients may complain to a complaints board (CB) that can impose a disciplinary 'critique'. Previous studies found that age and gender of GPs were associated with more complaints and were associated with complaint case outcomes. Likewise, complaints more often occur during OOH. Meanwhile knowledge about the characteristics of OOH related complaints is limited. The objectives of this study were to describe malpractice complaints about OOH in a Danish national sample and investigate predictors for critique.

## METHODS

CB case decisions about OOH concerning all Danish GPs completed during one year (2007) were reviewed (Birkeland, 2013). Complaint information was extracted from the case files and recorded in a database. Information about the clinical content was divided into surgical (e.g. appendicitis) or non-surgical (e.g. pneumonia). Data on the GPs were achieved from Danish National Board of Health registers. Odds ratios were estimated with logistic regression modelling.

## RESULTS

In 2007, the CB reviewed and concluded on 180 complaints about OOH. Seventy-seven percent (n=139) of complaints concerned male GPs. Most complaints arose from patients treated in their working years and the majority were female (54%). Most complaints were about OOH provided during holidays and weekends (55%). The average age of the involved GPs was 52.8 years. No significant association were found between case outcome and GP gender, GP age, patient gender, or patient category (adult or child/adolescent). However, complaints involving non-surgical problems were significantly associated with higher odds of receiving critique from CB (OR=3.91; p<0.01).

## LITTERATURE

Birkeland, S., Christensen, R., Damsbo, N., & Kragstrup, J. (2013). Patient complaint cases in primary health care: what are the characteristics of general practitioners involved? *Biomed Res Int*, 2013, 807204.



## CONCLUSION

- This study is a first step of investigating complaint cases related to OOH.
- We could not confirm previous findings of an association between complaint case outcomes and patient, and GP gender and age.
- Non-surgical clinical problems may be particularly difficult to manage in this setting.
- Further research should address OOH malpractice complaints.

<sup>1</sup>Department of Regional Health Research, University of Southern Denmark, and <sup>2</sup>Centre for Quality, Region of Southern Denmark, Middelfart, Denmark  
<sup>\*</sup>Centre for Quality and Department of Regional Health Research, University of Southern Denmark