

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
 FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS

BRANDON MATTHEWS,	)	
	)	
Plaintiff,	)	
	)	
v.	)	17-CV-1170
	)	
DR. AWADA, et al.,	)	
	)	
	)	
Defendants.	)	

**MERIT REVIEW OPINION**

**SUE E. MYERSCOUGH, U.S. District Judge.**

Plaintiff proceeds pro se from his incarceration in the Illinois River Correctional Center. His Complaint is before the Court for a merit review pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915A. This section requires the Court to identify cognizable claims stated by the Complaint or dismiss claims that are not cognizable.<sup>1</sup> In reviewing the complaint, the Court accepts the factual allegations as true, liberally construing them in Plaintiff's favor and taking Plaintiff's pro se status into account. Turley v. Rednour, 729 F.3d 645, 649 (7<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2013). However, conclusory statements and labels are insufficient.

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<sup>1</sup> A prisoner who has had three prior actions dismissed for failure to state a claim or as frivolous or malicious can no longer proceed in forma pauperis unless the prisoner is under "imminent danger of serious physical injury." 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g).

Enough facts must be provided to "state a claim for relief that is plausible on its face." Alexander v. U.S., 721 F.3d 418, 422 (7<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2013)(quoted cite omitted).

Plaintiff alleges that he has a cyst or abscess on his top gum, above his two front teeth. Antibiotics were prescribed at one point, which helped somewhat, but the dentist told Plaintiff that to fix the problem Plaintiff needed a root canal or needed to have the tooth removed. However, IDOC allegedly has a policy to not refer inmates for outside dental procedures such as root canals unless the inmate pays for the procedure, and the prison dentist is apparently unable to perform the root canal. Plaintiff does not have the money to pay for a root canal and does not want to have his tooth pulled if a root canal would save the tooth. He continues to experience pain, difficulty eating and sleeping, and occasional face swelling.

Offering a tooth extraction instead of a root canal likely does not rise to the level of an Eighth Amendment violation. Mathews v. Raemisch, 513 Fed.Appx. 605 (7<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2013)("Ajala argues that the district court erred by granting summary judgment on his claim of deliberate indifference to his infected tooth because the prison refuses to provide him with a root canal procedure. The district

court correctly found that the prison is offering him an extraction procedure and that this dispute is over nothing but the choice of one routine medical procedure versus another. That is not enough to prove an Eighth Amendment claim of deliberate indifference.”). However, that determination would be premature on this record. Accordingly, this case will proceed for service pursuant to the standard procedures.

**IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED:**

1) Pursuant to its merit review of the Complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, the Court finds that Plaintiff states a claim for deliberate indifference to his serious dental needs. This case proceeds solely on the claims identified in this paragraph. Any additional claims shall not be included in the case, except at the Court’s discretion on motion by a party for good cause shown or pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 15.

2) This case is now in the process of service. Plaintiff is advised to wait until counsel has appeared for Defendants before filing any motions, in order to give Defendants notice and an opportunity to respond to those motions. Motions filed before Defendants' counsel has filed an appearance will generally be

denied as premature. Plaintiff need not submit any evidence to the Court at this time, unless otherwise directed by the Court.

3) The Court will attempt service on Defendants by mailing each Defendant a waiver of service. Defendants have 60 days from the date the waiver is sent to file an Answer. If Defendants have not filed Answers or appeared through counsel within 90 days of the entry of this order, Plaintiff may file a motion requesting the status of service. After Defendants have been served, the Court will enter an order setting discovery and dispositive motion deadlines.

4) With respect to a Defendant who no longer works at the address provided by Plaintiff, the entity for whom that Defendant worked while at that address shall provide to the Clerk said Defendant's current work address, or, if not known, said Defendant's forwarding address. This information shall be used only for effectuating service. Documentation of forwarding addresses shall be retained only by the Clerk and shall not be maintained in the public docket nor disclosed by the Clerk.

5) Defendants shall file an answer within 60 days of the date the waiver is sent by the Clerk. A motion to dismiss is not an answer. The answer should include all defenses appropriate under

the Federal Rules. The answer and subsequent pleadings shall be to the issues and claims stated in this Opinion. In general, an answer sets forth Defendants' positions. The Court does not rule on the merits of those positions unless and until a motion is filed by Defendants. Therefore, no response to the answer is necessary or will be considered.

6) This District uses electronic filing, which means that, after Defense counsel has filed an appearance, Defense counsel will automatically receive electronic notice of any motion or other paper filed by Plaintiff with the Clerk. Plaintiff does not need to mail to Defense counsel copies of motions and other papers that Plaintiff has filed with the Clerk. However, this does not apply to discovery requests and responses. Discovery requests and responses are not filed with the Clerk. Plaintiff must mail his discovery requests and responses directly to Defendants' counsel. Discovery requests or responses sent to the Clerk will be returned unfiled, unless they are attached to and the subject of a motion to compel. Discovery does not begin until Defense counsel has filed an appearance and the Court has entered a scheduling order, which will explain the discovery process in more detail.

7) Counsel for Defendants is hereby granted leave to depose Plaintiff at his place of confinement. Counsel for Defendants shall arrange the time for the deposition.

8) Plaintiff shall immediately notify the Court, in writing, of any change in his mailing address and telephone number.

Plaintiff's failure to notify the Court of a change in mailing address or phone number will result in dismissal of this lawsuit, with prejudice.

9) If a Defendants fails to sign and return a waiver of service to the clerk within 30 days after the waiver is sent, the Court will take appropriate steps to effect formal service through the U.S. Marshal's service on that Defendant and will require that Defendant to pay the full costs of formal service pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 4(d)(2).

10) Within 10 days of receiving from Defendants' counsel an authorization to release medical records, Plaintiff is directed to sign and return the authorization to Defendants' counsel.

11) **Plaintiff's motion for the Court to appoint counsel is denied (5), with leave to renew on a more developed record.** At this early stage, Plaintiff appears competent to proceed pro se. His

pleadings are relatively well written and adequately convey the facts supporting his claim. He also has personal knowledge of his symptoms, his attempts to obtain a root canal, and the responses he has received. If Plaintiff renews his motion, he should set forth how far he has gone in school, any jobs he has held inside and outside of prison, any classes he has taken in prison, and any prior litigation experience he has.

**12) The clerk is directed to enter the standard order granting Plaintiff's in forma pauperis petition and assessing an initial partial filing fee, if not already done, and to attempt service on Defendants pursuant to the standard procedures.**

**13) The Clerk is directed to enter the standard qualified protective order pursuant to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.**

ENTERED: May 1, 2017

FOR THE COURT:

**s/Sue E. Myerscough**  
SUE E. MYERSCOUGH  
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE