

Patients beware: many physicians still practice despite multiple sanctions

Written by Australian Business

September 18, 2013 /**24-7PressRelease**/ -- The results of a recent investigation conducted by USA TODAY reveals some startling information about physicians that all patients should be aware of.

According to the study, many doctors practicing medicine in the U.S. who have committed [medical errors](#) --and in some cases so egregious that the errors even lead to death--are not being punished by state medical boards and are allowed to continue to practice medicine.

Specific cases

One case in point involves a Texas doctor who had a history of mismanaging medications for his patients. He also had his own history of prescription drug abuse. Despite this, he was still allowed to practice medicine. The state medical board--after negotiations and drawn-out investigations--took 4 years to finally get around to banning him from seeing patients. However, by then it was too late. One of his patients under his care died as a result of his failure to adequately monitor her meds.

During the periods of 1991-2008, one California doctor made eight medical malpractice payouts to various patients. However, that doctor continues to practice medicine and still holds a medical license today.

From 1993-2009, another doctor in the state of Florida made six malpractice payouts to his patients. In 2004, he was cited for misconduct that posed an "immediate threat to health or safety of patients." However, his medical file indicates that he has a "clean license."

Commonality: too many negligent doctors still practice

According to USA TODAY, this happens all too often. Doctors with a severe history of [medical negligence](#) are still able to maintain active medical licenses, practice medicine, and put patients' lives at risk. They found this startling revelation after examining publically available information relating to doctor malpractice. Data from HMOs and the National Practitioner Data Bank that carries disciplinary information and background data on doctors was reviewed.

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Startling results were found.

Zero action on serious cases

The data showed that from 2001-2011, state medical boards failed to fine, suspend or restrict the medical licenses of roughly 52 percent of 6,000 doctors with malpractice sanctions.

Also during this period, the data revealed that state medical boards failed to take action on physicians who had a medical malpractice settlement or judgment against them averaging \$5.2 million.

The results also showed that state medical boards failed to restrict or revoke the medical licenses of 250 doctors who committed such egregious medical errors that constituted an "immediate threat to health and safety" of patients.

Dire need for more oversight, accountability

As a result of these findings, it's evident more physician oversight is needed by medical boards.

David Swankin, head of the Citizen Advocacy Center, says that "medical boards are not like health departments that go out to see if a restaurant is clean; they're totally reactive, because they rely on these mandatory reports--and they're supposed to act on them," he says.

Unlikely action

It's likely that this problem won't be resolved anytime soon. States all across the country are cutting budgets in the wake of the stagnant economy. This means more work for those involved with investigating negligent physicians.

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In the meantime, patients are encouraged to be diligent and look into the backgrounds of the physicians caring for them--particularly those who plan to undergo extensive treatment or surgical procedures.

Those who have questions about their physicians' behavior should consult with a medical malpractice attorney.

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