

Study finds doctors allowed to continue practicing after serious errors

Written by Australian Business

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One of the most unnerving aspects of developing unexplained medical symptoms is the patient's subsequent need to rely on a medical professional to ensure he or she receives proper treatment. In addition to relying on the physician's expertise, patients must also rely on their state's medical board to ensure doctors who have previously made egregious errors are not allowed to continue practicing medicine.

Unfortunately, a new study conducted by USA Today revealed that, in many states across the country, doctors not only keep their medical licenses, but often do not receive any type of disciplinary action following serious medical errors and medical malpractice claims.

In fact, there are occasions where hospitals refuse to allow a particular doctor to continue practicing medicine at the facility, while the medical board in the state takes no action. According to the study, hospitals across the U.S. revoked the privileges of approximately 6,000 physicians from 2001 to 2011, preventing them from working at the medical facilities. Of those doctors, less than one-half were disciplined by the medical board in their state. Over 3,000 of the doctors never received any type of disciplinary action, which could have varied from a fine to the revocation of their medical licenses.

In around 250 cases, the hospitals considered the physicians to be an "immediate threat to [the] health and safety" of the patients; however, their state's medical board did not revoke or restrict their medical licenses.

Doctors with numerous malpractice claims continue practicing

The USA Today study also found that physicians with multiple malpractice claims have also been allowed to continue treating patients. From 2001 to 2011, approximately 100,000 physicians settled medical malpractice claims financially. Of those, a small number of doctors -- around 800, in total -- paid about 10 percent of the total medical malpractice payouts during that period. Each of those doctors paid, on average, over \$5 million to settle medical malpractice

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claims during that time.

Shockingly, despite the evidence of improper conduct presented by the malpractice claims, less than one-fifth of those doctors had any negative action -- such as license suspension or revocation -- taken by the medical board in their state.

These statistics have led some to question the effectiveness of medical boards, which are often comprised in large part of other physicians. A study conducted by Public Citizen had similar results to the USA Today report, as it found medical boards were not taking sufficient action in light of information regarding doctor malpractice.

If you or a loved one has been harmed due to substandard care provided by a physician, you should take action to protect yourself. Seeking the counsel of a skilled medical malpractice attorney will ensure your rights are protected.