

Other Information at
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- * [Board Disciplinary Actions](#)
- * [Annual Reports and Publications](#)
- * [Contact Information](#)
- * [Directions to the Board](#)
- * [Complaint Forms & Instructions](#)
- * [Links to Massachusetts Hospitals](#)
- * [Links to Major Health Plans](#)
- * [Links to Other State Agencies](#)
- * [Board Regulations](#)
- * [Patient Safety Updates](#)

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**Massachusetts Board of
Registration in Medicine**

**Physician Profiles
Consumer Guide**

781-876-8200
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PHYSICIAN PROFILES SERVICE MALPRACTICE AND BOARD DISCIPLINE

Massachusetts was the first state to release malpractice payment information in this way. Consumers should read the extensive disclaimer and explanations that accompany the information. Just because a physician made a malpractice payment, don't assume that the physician is not a good doctor. Sometimes, the insurer decides to settle a claim without ever discussing it with the doctor. The best way to understand malpractice data is to talk to the doctor about it.

Here are some good questions:

- “Did this malpractice payment involve the same procedure I am having?”***
- “Did you make any changes to your practice in response to the problem?”***

Different doctors will respond to questions in different ways. Someone who tells you it's none of your business may not have the communication skills you want.

Another doctor may say something like this:

“I used to do this procedure in my office. I learned that I didn't have enough backup when there were complications and that's why patients, like you, are now asked to have the procedure in the hospital.”

Such an answer would show you that you are talking to a doctor who respects your question, learns from his/her experiences, and is willing to make changes to improve patient safety.

Malpractice payments are presented within the context of the physician's specialty. Some medical specialties are far more likely to have more numerous and more expensive payments. Comparing physicians to others in the same specialty accounts for these specialty differences.

Board Discipline

When the Board takes final disciplinary action against a physician, it is noted on the profile for ten years.



Additional information about the discipline can be found on the Board's website in the "Disciplinary Action List" and the press release for the corresponding date. In April 2007, the Board of Medicine began posting copies of the actual Board disciplinary orders on the website.

PHYSICIAN PROFILES

Massachusetts was the first state to offer a comprehensive program to give patients access to information about the education, training, and experience of all licensed physicians.

The "Physician Profiles" program is one tool patients can use to make the right health care decisions. Patients are encouraged to use the physician profile information to foster better communication with a physician.

Who Should Use the Physician Profiles ?

Consumers use Physician Profiles when trying to choose a physician from a list supplied by their health insurer. Others have found the information useful when they have been referred to a specialist. Expectant mothers use Physician Profiles as one step in choosing an obstetrician.

Many physicians use the system to help patients when making a referral to a specialist.

What's On a Profile ?

- * Education
- * Training
- * Medical Specialties
- * Professional demographics, including business address, insurance plan and hospital affiliations, and available translation services.
- * Professional or community awards received
- * Research or publications by the physician
- * Malpractice claims paid in the past ten years
- * Hospital discipline in the past ten years
- * Criminal convictions in the past ten years
- * Disciplinary actions of the Massachusetts Board of Registration in Medicine in the past ten years

What's NOT On a Profile ?

- * The number of suits filed against a physician
- * Complication rates for hospitals or physicians
- * Patient mortality rates
- * Malpractice dollar awards



Using Physician Profiles

Office Location

Search for a physician in a specific city or town. Find a specialist in a town by entering both the town and the specialty on the search page.

Insurance Plans Accepted

See if a physician accepts your insurance plan. Please be aware that these contractual arrangements change quickly and you should always confirm eligibility with your provider.

Hospital Affiliation

If there is a specific hospital that you prefer to use, find out if a physician has privileges at that facility. Some physicians have full admitting privileges while others have different levels of access to a hospital's services. Ask the physician to explain the type of privileges he/she has.

Education & Training

Information on where the doctor went to medical school and trained as a resident.

Specialty & Board Certification

This section shows the area of medicine in which the physician specializes. Board certification shows that the physician has additional training in that medical specialty or has passed special exams to prove his/her competence in the specialty. This certification is from a medical professional association, not the state medical board. Physicians are not required to be Board Certified, but many patients prefer to see physicians with these credentials.

Honors & Awards Publications & Research

Physicians are not required to submit this information, but patients find the information extremely helpful in choosing a new physician. For example, a patient with a significant family history of diabetes may prefer a physician who has published research papers in this area.

Criminal Convictions

Any serious criminal matters reported to the Board in the past ten years are listed in this section. The criminal issue may or may not be related to the practice of medicine.

Hospital Discipline

Whenever a Massachusetts hospital suspends or revokes a physician's privileges in the hospital, the Board of Medicine is informed. Details on the cause for the action should be requested from the physician. Usually, the Board of Medicine will not have additional information about the reason for the action available to consumers.



Physician Profiles can be found on the Board's web site:

www.massmedboard.org

Or through the
Consumer Services Call Center
800-377-0550



Information about your doctor is just a click