

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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BOSTON-The Board of Registration in Medicine today released its seventh annual public summary of physician disciplinary actions taken by Massachusetts hospitals. The data released today summarizes hospital disciplinary actions taken in 2000, as well as a seven-year recap of these actions.

The 2000 summary shows that 22 of the 112 reporting hospitals (19.6%) imposed thirty-nine actions against thirty-five physicians. This represents a decrease of twenty-four actions over the number taken in 1999; the number of physicians disciplined decreased by ten. Of the thirty-nine actions, five actions (12.8%) resulted in the revocation or suspension of the physician's privileges, and an additional four (10.3%) represent the physician's resignation from the hospital.

Peter N. Madras, M.D., Board Chair, stated that the Board will continue to monitor hospitals, as well as other health care facilities, to ensure the timely and accurate reporting of physician discipline. "We are concerned about the low rate of reporting among some hospitals and will work with the health care leaders to ensure that hospitals and other health care facilities are fulfilling, and will continue to fulfill, their duties to discipline physicians, where appropriate, and to inform the Board of such disciplinary actions." Dr. Madras pointed out that without the full cooperation of hospitals, the Board loses an important source of information about problem physicians.

Over one-third of all hospitals have never reported any physician discipline during the past seven years. Dr. Madras noted that the Board has the legal authority to fine hospitals that do not carry out their reporting obligations. He emphasized that health care facility disciplinary action reports are only one source of referral to the Board for potential disciplinary action. Other sources include patient complaints, reports from malpractice insurers and the civil courts, referrals from other government agencies and reports filed by physicians and other health care providers.

Dr. Madras acknowledged Hallmark Health Systems, Brigham & Women's Hospital, UMass Medical Center, Massachusetts General Hospital, and Emerson Hospital for their compliance with the disciplinary reporting requirements. The Board has consistently stated that higher hospital disciplinary numbers tend to indicate high standards of excellence and performance review in hospitals, not a greater number of problem physicians.

The Board, comprised of five physicians and two community representatives, licenses over 30,000 doctors and acupuncturists. More information about the Board is available at its website:

www.massmedboard.org.

NOTE TO EDITORS: Copies of the 2000 and seven-year summaries are included.