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Physicians Working Under the Influence of Alcohol: An Analysis of Past Disciplinary Proceedings and Their Outcomes

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Disciplinary actions against intoxicated physicians are rare due to underreporting.
- In 90% of analyzed cases, no patient was harmed by an intoxicated provider.
- Out of 157 patients treated by a drunk doctor, four were hurt — one seriously.
- Of 17 disciplined physicians — one lost a job and medical license.

ABSTRACT

Introduction: The intoxicated person may cause harm to others, often requiring expert evaluation for the determination of guilt. The primary aim of this study was to determine the mechanisms of mistakes that led 17 doctors accused of working under the influence of alcohol to face malpractice. We also wanted to clarify what were the legal, professional, and financial consequences — depending on specific patient outcomes.

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