

Charity: Welcome back. We're here with Dave Farnbauch, and today we're going to talk about the National Practitioners Data Bank. So what is that? What's the National Practitioners Data Bank?

Dave Farnbauch: Well, Charity, the National Practitioners Data Bank was established back in the mid-80s as a way... It was established by the federal government. It's actually a Department of Health and Human Services agency that established this internet repository, or database, of information about medical practitioners that could be accessed by a number of different entities, so that we would have information about medical providers. So that a medical provider who maybe got into trouble in one state could, before the establishment of this National Practitioners Data Bank, they could move to another state. And it would be very difficult to sort of reconstruct or investigate what kind of a history that practitioner had, because there was no database and information where you could do research on whether they had had a number of malpractice lawsuits. They had had issues with their medical license, they'd lost their hospital privileges. So it was very difficult to find a way to investigate that.

Dave Farnbauch: So Congress decided to address that by creating this repository of information where hospitals, medical licensing boards, health insurance companies, a variety of different entities could go to the internet, make a request on a particular medical provider and in essence get their whole malpractice claim history, their licensure history, whether their hospital privileges had been revoked. So that they could have that information to make decisions about whether you want to add a particular doctor to your hospital staff. Do you want to add that doctor to your group? Do we need information as law enforcement about, if somebody gets into trouble in this state, can we find out whether that provider got in trouble in other states for doing things that maybe run afoul of the law or the rules and regulations governing medical providers.

Charity: So then I assume the intent and the purpose of that really is to protect the end user. You and I, the people who are consuming the services of these physicians.

Dave Farnbauch: Sure. I mean having that kind of database available to be able to track medical providers and their history does ultimately protect the consumer. But it also sort of provides for an orderly way for people within the healthcare industry to make decisions about who to hire, and once again what their history is.

Charity: So who can access this information?

Dave Farnbauch: Well, basically the long and short answer to that would be people within the healthcare industry. Hospitals, health insurance plans, as I mentioned before, entities that govern medical providers like state licensing boards, law enforcement, they can make those requests. But the public, John Q Public, cannot get on the internet and access that information for obvious reasons. Because this is something that I would say that most medical providers don't want out there for public consumption.

Charity: If we go to a physician that is part of a group, we would know then that their employer had the opportunity to have access to that information.

Dave Farnbauch: I would say right now there's a lot of mandatory reporting to the National Practitioners Data Bank and there's a lot of mandatory checking that must be done by different entities before somebody's hired, or decisions are made about staff privileges and stuff like that. So it's a two way street. The medical profession can get information, but they're also required to disclose information when things happen. For example, in our world, being medical malpractice attorneys, when there's a medical malpractice payment made on behalf of a physician or a hospital, those payments are reported to the National Practitioners Data Bank.

Charity: It's good that there are those checks and balances. If you believe that you have been a victim of medical malpractice, you can call Sweeney Law Firm and they'll walk you through that and see if you do have a case. Give them a call at 420-3137. We'll be right back.