The Horrific Story Of A Texas Neurosurgeon And Why It Could Happen Again

Skeptical Scalpel

If you are interested in patient safety and medical errors and haven't read the story in the Texas Observer about a spectacularly incompetent neurosurgeon, you should. It is long but worth it. As I tweeted last week, it will make you cringe.

The story includes many details about operations done poorly and patients suffering paralysis and death at the hands of Dr. Christopher D. Duntsch.

The Texas Medical Board is over-worked, slow to act and apparently toothless when it comes to disciplining doctors. Despite many complaints, it took them more than a year before it temporarily suspended his license on June 26, 2013.

However, the author of the piece, some Dallas area lawyers and at least one bloggerare mistaken when they blame the malpractice monetary cap in Texas for contributing to the delay.

Yes, Texas has a cap on non-economic damages. Is that really the problem? Or is it what I and many others have written, that average duration of a malpractice suit is well over 4 years, with many cases lasting much longer than that?

If the only way this doctor could have been stopped was by malpractice litigation, he would still be operating today.

This dreadful situation was created by a number of factors.

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