

Actions against physician licenses due to substance use down

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While actions against physician licenses related to substance use have

declined, they remain markedly higher than actions related to physical health, according to a research letter published in the June 3 issue of *JAMA Health Forum*.

Lisa S. Rotenstein, M.D., from Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, and colleagues assessed patterns in the actions against physician licenses due to substance use and [psychological health](#) versus physical health. The analysis included all physicians with actions against their licenses between 2004 and 2020 that were reported to the National Practitioner Databank.

The researchers found that 76.3 percent of actions against the licenses of U.S. physicians were related to substance use, 11.5 percent were due to psychological impairment, and 12.2 percent were due to [physical impairment](#). Actions related to substance use declined in frequency between 2004 and 2020 (from 5.6 to 1.6 actions per 10,000 physicians), despite a peak in 2011. There were also decreases noted in actions related to psychological impairment and physical impairment during the same time period. Physicians with license actions related to [substance use](#) or psychological impairment were more likely to have an indefinite rather than permanent penalty length (69.2 and 80.6 percent, respectively, versus 58.1 percent for physical health), to have an emergency action taken against their license (12.0 and 20.6 percent, respectively, versus 8.0 percent), and to have a greater mean number of lifetime license actions (4.5 and 3.5, respectively, versus 2.5).

"These findings suggest continued areas to improve [mental health](#) and support offerings for physicians, particularly interventions that may preclude the need for license actions in the first place," the authors write.

Two authors disclosed financial ties to the [pharmaceutical industry](#).

More information: Lisa S. Rotenstein et al, Patterns in Actions

Against Physician Licenses Related to Substance Use and Psychological or Physical Impairment in the US From 2004 to 2020, *JAMA Health Forum* (2022). [DOI: 10.1001/jamahealthforum.2022.1163](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamahealthforum.2022.1163)

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