

FOX31 Denver Undercover Investigation: Dentists With a Dark Side

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DENVER — Denver dentist Stephen Stein made national headlines when he allegedly reused dirty needles on thousands of patients.

But the FOX31 Denver investigative team has discovered Stein is not alone.

Investigative reporter Heidi Hemmat found other Colorado dentists accused of putting patients at risk.

We dug deep into state documents and discovered dentists with a history of substance abuse, prescription drug fraud, even one who allegedly caused a lady's death.

We went under cover with hidden cameras and found practicing dentists who previously had their license suspended or revoked.

Dentists including Larry Haws. According to Colorado dental board records, Haws issued "over 130 prescriptions" for powerful pain killers to himself.

He pleaded guilty to drug possession and was asked by the state to surrender his license in 2002. In an effort to get his license back, Haws agreed to random drug testing. But then he tested positive for Benzodiazepines, another powerful tranquilizer.

That prompted the dental board to put Haws on probation and mandate he get more random drug testing. Under the conditions of that probation, Haws is now practicing at Emergency Dental Care USA in Centennial.

He would not return our phone calls. When we showed up at his office, his assistant asked us to leave.

We also made an appointment with Dr. George Bagwell. Records show Bagwell's dental license was suspended in Alaska in 1999 because he was found to be dependent on "Nitrous oxide, Valium, Talwin, Talacen, Halcyon and Vicodin."

Two years later, the dental board discovered he was practicing without a license in Colorado. He finally obtained a new license in 2009 and he joined Aspen Valley Prosthodontics in Basalt.

Bagwell refused our request for an interview. He claims the board's records are wrong, but offered no other explanation.

Then there's Dr. Ronald Lambert in Longmont. He has a long history with the Colorado Dental Board and he has been in trouble in Washington state.

Police in Washington arrested Lambert in 1981 for felony burglary where he reportedly "assaulted an elderly lady causing her death."

He served time in jail then moved to Colorado and got his dental license in 1992.

Between 2000 and 2003 police arrested Lambert for assault, cruelty towards a child, drug possession, manufacturing meth and disorderly conduct. The dental board suspended his license, then revoked it for "substance abuse and criminal activity."

Lambert got a new license five years ago. He admits he's a recovered meth addict and blames the drug for his past mistakes, "As a result of my addiction at that time, I made some really poor choices," he said.

Our investigation also found dirty dentists, one who "stored extracted teeth in Dixie cups," and hundreds of "used syringes in coffee cans under the sink." That Commerce City dentist is no longer practicing.

And there is a dentist who held a "knife to a dental assistant's neck and brandished a sword at a patient." The dentist is licensed to practice in Colorado, but is currently in Missouri.