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Court Appointee El-Sabaawi Practicing Medicine Without a License?
Psychiatric Care at Five California State Hospitals In Hands of Unlicensed Doctor

The Union of American Physicians and Dentists (UAPD) has filed a complaint against Mohamed El-Sabaawi with the California Medical Board after discovering that El-Sabaawi appears to be practicing medicine at a number of state mental health hospitals without a valid California medical license. El-Sabaawi's medical license expired on February 28, 2009, according to the Medical Board's own records.

It is not known why El-Sabaawi has not renewed his medical license. The Medical Board website states: "Practicing medicine without a valid license may lead to disciplinary action against a physician."

Since 2006, El-Sabaawi has worked as a court-appointed monitor overseeing changes in five state hospitals run by the California Department of Mental Health (DMH): Napa (Napa County), Atascadero (San Luis Obispo County), Coalinga (Fresno County) Metropolitan (Los Angeles County), and Patton (San Bernadino County). In his work as monitor, El-Sabaawi determines the system of care followed by the state-employed psychiatrists at the hospitals, work which requires a valid medical license.

Psychiatrists employed in the facilities where El-Sabaawi works have been critical of his plan for improving psychiatric care, with many believing that his directives lead to worse outcomes, particularly among the most severe cases. Sabaawi's imposition of "treatment malls," in which hospitalized patients with severe mental illness interact with doctors, non-medical staff, and each other in large groups, has been sharply criticized by psychiatrists, who believe the patients need focused, one-on-one care from licensed medical doctors. El-Sabaawi has also done little to recruit psychiatrists to fill the large number of vacant positions at Atascadero State Hospital, leaving patient care in the hands of a rotating cast of highly-paid, short-term medical contractors.

The Union of American Physicians and Dentists (UAPD) represents the 350 physicians and psychiatrists who provide care at Napa, Atascadero, Metropolitan, Coalinga and Patton State Hospitals. Founded in 1972, UAPD is the largest union of fully-licensed doctors in the United States.