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## Red Flags About Md. Man Ignored

With Each New Job, More Accusations of Substance and Sex Abuse

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Obstetrician-gynecologist Jeffrey M. Levitt needed a job, and Stuttgart, Ark., needed an OB-GYN. So the country town about an hour southeast of Little Rock was prepared to overlook the warning signs.

Board records from Maryland and Florida show that Levitt lost his Maryland medical license in 1993 for having sex with two patients and "had to be asked to not carry a gun" when he worked at Holy Cross Hospital in Silver Spring.

So when he learned about the Arkansas job through a job placement agency, he applied.

"The staff at Stuttgart Regional Medical Center is willing to take a chance on him in spite of the red flags," Noble B. Daniel, then the hospital's chief of staff, wrote in a December 1995 letter to the Arkansas State Medical Board.

Gary P. Wood, the town's retiring obstetrician, warned the Arkansas board to examine Levitt's history in Maryland.

"When folks get into that kind of trouble, they go anyplace people will have them," Wood said in an interview. Stuttgart hospital administrators, he said, "felt that they needed somebody so badly that they could overlook the red flags. Bad choice."

The Arkansas board granted Levitt a temporary license in December 1995, and Stuttgart welcomed him.

But within three months, the situation soured. Levitt said in a recent interview that he was forced from the hospital after "a woman made allegations that I made a pass at her and said something lewd." There were also rumors that he was an alcoholic, he said. He has denied the accusations. "Everything I did, they twisted. I couldn't get anyone to listen to me."

In 1996, Levitt returned to practice in Maryland, which had reinstated his license on probation after a year, despite the three-year suspension in 1993, according to board records.

But in 1998, the Maryland medical board began an investigation after a patient complained that Levitt wrote her prescriptions and told her to bring him some of the drugs for his use, board records show.

Levitt also asked doctors at a Rockville clinic where he worked to write prescriptions for him, sometimes calling them at 2 a.m.

In July 1998, clinic staff said Levitt showed up appearing to be "intoxicated and/or under the influence of medication or controlled substances," according to board records. He performed acupuncture on a patient but abandoned her with the needles still in her body. "That was my fault. I forgot that she was there," he said in an interview, denying that he had been under the influence. "They used that as an excuse to fire me."

The Maryland board suspended Levitt's license in 1999 and revoked it for five years in 2000 after finding that he again had sex with patients, had questionable prescribing practices and practiced acupuncture without a state registration. He is eligible to apply for reinstatement this year. Levitt, 49, now lives in Scottsdale, Ariz., with his wife, a former patient who once filed a complaint with the Maryland medical board, saying that they had a sexual relationship, that he used her to procure drugs and that he had thrown her across the room.

The Maryland board should have been tougher on Levitt, argued Sandra Brown, who claimed he tore her colon 12 years ago during a uterine laparoscopy. Brown, who lives in Prince George's County, said she was in so much pain after the surgery that she couldn't sit up or eat for more than a week.

"I called him every other day about the pain, and he kept telling me it was gas," she said. Eventually, surgeons removed eight inches of her colon, she said.


Brown, 47, sued Levitt. She settled the case for an undisclosed amount in 1997, she said. Levitt said he told Brown that the surgery was high-risk.

"She knew that," he said in the interview. "She had damage, but it wasn't because I was neglectful. With laser [surgery], you don't see certain things."

Another former Maryland patient, Margie Galanos, sued Levitt, alleging that he punctured her bladder and bowel during a laparoscopy in 1991.

"When I got home, I was in so much pain that I just prayed to God to let me pass out," said Galanos, 43, who lives near Athens, Ga.

"I spent 46 days in a critical-care unit after what should have been a simple laparoscopy."




**Jeffrey M. Levitt**

① **1995:** Moves from Maryland, where his license had been temporarily suspended, to Stuttgart, Ark.

② **1996:** Leaves Arkansas after three months, returns to Maryland.

③ **2000:** Moves to Scottsdale, Ariz., after losing his Maryland license. Is not currently practicing.



SOURCE: State Medical Boards

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Galanos said she was unable to have children after the procedure. Her suit was settled for an undisclosed amount in 1997.

Levitt denied puncturing Galanos's bladder and bowel and said her problems were caused by contaminated equipment. "It wasn't due to the handling of the practitioner," he said. "She's right. It should have been simple. But lo and behold, [expletive] happens."

*Staff researcher Bobby Pratt contributed to this report.*

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