

Colorado Medical Board



Five years after Colorado became the 38th U.S. state in 1876, the legislature enacted the state's first [Medical Practice Act](#) creating the Colorado State Board of Medical Examiners. The composition of the board was statutorily set at nine physicians, "six physicians of the regular, two of the homeopathic, and one of the eclectic system or school of medicine." Dr. C. M. Parker was elected as the first board president and was issued Colorado license #1 on July 8, 1881. A colleague portrayed Dr. Parker as "a big, hustling, energetic man, always dressed in a Prince Albert coat, [with] one of the biggest practices in Denver. He fit in well in the new, rough community. He answered to Theodore Roosevelt's classification of certain western characters whom he described as 'men with the bark on.' "

From its inception through the 1920s, the Colorado board spent much of its time dealing with suspect or fraudulent medical credentials. The Colorado Medical Practice Act required either medical education or the passage of an exam for licensure, but not both. Scandal erupted when it was learned that several "medical schools" were fraudulent enterprises that merely 'taught the exam' to anyone willing to pay the price. One such scam originated in St. Louis, Mo., at the so-called St. Louis College of Physicians and Surgeons, which was apparently a diploma mill. In 1923, the St. Louis Star published an "expose of the traffic in medical diplomas, together with an exposition ... of how fraud is practiced in connection with examinations conducted by state examining boards." The editor of the Star wrote a [letter](#) to the Colorado board essentially asking "what's up" in this regard in Colorado. The interesting aspect, from a Colorado point of view, is reflected in board member [Dr. David A. Strickler's](#) response: "We are rather peculiarly situated in the State of Colorado in that anyone of good moral character is permitted to take the examination for a license to practice medicine and if successful in passing the same is given a license. Under this provision of our law it is possible for a man who has never been in a medical college but who has had good coaching to be able to pass the examination and receive a license." At the time, Dr. Strickler also served as president of the Federation of State Boards of Medical Examiners, a position he held from 1916 into the 1920s.

In 1976, the Medical Practice Act was revised to add two public members to the board and in 2000, the law was again revised to add an additional two public members. In the early 1980s, three board members were instrumental in moving the board into the modern era - Fred Paquette, M.D., Bruce Wilson, M.D., and Christine Petersen, M.D. In 1982, the board acquired the authority to use hearing officers, now Administrative Law Judges, to hear its cases. Five years later, the Medical Practice Act was amended to create a peer health assistance program, which was funded through a dedicated portion of physician renewal fees. The Colorado Physician Health Program, which has been the designated peer health assistance provider since the inception of this statute, has become a nationally recognized peer assistance program and has provided assistance to more than 3,500 Colorado physicians since its inception. In 1990, the board decided as a matter of policy to make all disciplinary actions of the board a matter of public record and in 2007, the passage of the [Michael Skolnik Medical Transparency Act](#) created one of the most comprehensive physician profile systems in the country.