Charges Brought upon Doctor and Advocate for Toxic Flame Retardant Chemicals

Dr. David Heimbach, a well-known advocate of the flame retardant chemical industry, was one of the nation's top burn surgeons. But now the doctor is facing disciplinary charges and has surrendered his medical license. The charges have been brought on by Washington's Medical Quality Assurance Commission.

State officials have accused Heimbach of fabricating testimony. A 2012 Tribune investigation titled, "Playing with Fire," exposed Heimbach as a fraud. The doctor was thought to be an unbiased burn expert who testified to the efficacy of the toxic flame retardant chemicals added to furniture. Not only are these chemicals toxic, but research has shown that despite what Dr. Heimbach's claimed, they do not work.

The Tribune reported that Heimbach's testimony about babies dying in fires was part of a campaign of deception paid for by the chemical industry.

In the charges, the commission cited Heimbach's work for Citizens for Fire Safety. It turns out this organization is merely a front that is founded, funded, and controlled by the three largest manufacturers of flame retardant chemicals.

Due to health concerns, states were looking into banning or at least putting limitations, on flame retardant usage.

Citizens for Fire Safety accomplished their agenda, which was to scare the public in regards to the dangers of fires, while downplaying health risks linked to flame retardant chemicals, including, but not limited to, cancer, developmental disorders, and neurological deficits.

In a written response to the commission, Heimbach said that Citizens for Fire Safety paid him a total of $240,000 for consulting work he did in 2010 and 2011. The problem is, he never disclosed this information at legislative hearings.

“I should have been more circumspect regarding this, but I was an advocate of fire retardants and had read the scientific literature indicating that they were useful and that the benefits exceeded the risks of their use,” he wrote to the commission. “I only learned the true circumstances after the newspaper articles appeared. Mea culpa for this.”

The doctor also said that he believes flame retardants are useful and that his testimony was not meant to mislead anyone.

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