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Madison psychiatrist with history of inappropriate behavior charged with possessing child pornography

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David Israelstam

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A Madison psychiatrist who has been reprimanded twice in the past for inappropriate conduct with patients was charged Thursday with two counts of possession of child pornography.

Dr. David M. Israelstam, 73, was released on a signature bond after an initial court appearance Thursday morning.

Israelstam was ordered to have no contact with a computer technician and former patient who discovered pornography on his computer, nor with anyone under 18, and to not use any device capable of accessing the Internet. He is allowed contact with his two grandchildren if two adults are present.

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On Thursday, an answering service said Israelstam's office was temporarily closed until Monday. His attorney, Timothy Verhoff, declined to comment on whether Israelstam was seeing patients, or about the case.

Jeff Weigand, spokesman for the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services, which licenses psychiatrists in the state, said it had not received a complaint related to the current charges against Israelstam. After learning of the charges from the State Journal, Weigand said an investigation had been opened "as an immediate priority."

"Appropriate action will be taken, as allowed by law, to protect the public," Weigand said.

Madison police completed their investigation about a year ago and forwarded it to the Dane County District Attorney's Office, police spokesman Joel DeSpain said.

According to a criminal complaint, on Sept. 17, 2011, a former patient of Israelstam who worked on his computers told police that he had discovered videos, which appeared to have been covertly recorded by Israelstam in his office, showing him having sex with adult women.

DeSpain said police were not able to positively identify a woman clearly visible in at least one of the videos.

According to the complaint:

One of the videos appeared to be recorded using a camera located in Israelstam's shirt pocket. The computer technician told police Israelstam used a pen camera that Israelstam had asked him to set up, as well as a webcam, but he had refused.

The man also told police Israelstam had a large collection of pornographic videos in the basement closet of his home and "tons of pornography" in the trunk of his green Jaguar and another vehicle.

On Oct. 4, 2011, Madison police searched Israelstam's residence on Arbor Vitae Place and his office at 330 S. Whitney Way.

Dozens of binders containing printed images of child pornography were taken from Israelstam's residence. Digital images of child pornography dated from March 2003 to April 2011 also were found on a computer hard drive and a DVD.

Police also found nearly every wall space in Israelstam's office was covered with photographs and drawings of predominantly young female faces.

A criminal analyst with the state Department of Criminal Investigation also found at least 64 digital images of adolescent girls in various provocative poses, some of whom were wearing revealing clothing, which had been taken in Israelstam's office. Many of the images were of the same girl from the time she was in her mid-teens through her late teens.

Among the images on Israelstam's office computers was a color photograph of a 3- to 5-year-old girl, which appears to have been taken in the kitchen area of Israelstam's home, in which the child is lifting her shirt to reveal designs painted on her chest and torso.

Israelstam was reprimanded by the state Medical Examining Board in 2011 for a 2008 incident in which he told a female patient in her early 20s that he knew a young man with Asperger's syndrome who was looking for a young woman with whom to have a sexual relationship and asked her if she would be interested.

In 2000, Israelstam was reprimanded for his conduct with another patient. In that case, he hugged a woman in her 30s several times while she was hospitalized after an overdose in 1995, and told the patient about problems he had with his mother, ex-wife and daughter. The patient also believed Israelstam was expressing sexual interest toward her during a discussion they had about sexual attraction.

In both cases, Israelstam attended programs on professional boundaries. He also paid a fine.

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