

Mental illness and prison

[Health & Medicine](#), [Mental Health](#)



Mental illness is a medical condition that disrupts a person's thinking, mood, feelings and even their ability to function in everyday life. Mental illness, as with any serious medical illness; cannot be overcome through willpower. It is not related to the intelligence or character of a person. Mental illness has been documented since the ancient times. There are notes, although limited, in an Egyptian document that describes disoriented states of attention and emotions. Ancient Indian, Chinese, Greek, and many other civilizations all have similar documentation about mental illness. A lot of methods were used in ancient times by different civilizations to "treat" or "cure" the mental illnesses of their people. Magical spells, herbs and ointments, acupuncture, and even hallucinogens were used as part of the healing ritual, a pretty advanced method considering the era that they were in. Over time, people started to study mental disorders hoping to find a way to treat it. Mental institutions/hospitals were built to help people with mental illness get treated and lead a better life. But, with our economy many of the hospitals were shut down and mentally ill people who were caught by the police doing something wrong because of their illness were sent to prisons instead of mental hospitals. Prisons do not have adequate resources for treatment of this disease. They are designed to rehabilitate and release prisoners back to society. Prisoners are required to follow-up with parole officers and receive other types of non-medical support to rejoin society. However, when a mentally ill patient gets released from prison, they are not provided any support groups or counselors to follow-up on their care. This can cause a relapse of the behavior and ultimately, a return to prison. Mentally ill patients should receive treatment in mental hospitals, not in prisons. Prisons

do not have enough resources for the treatment on mental disorders. There are medical personnel that work in prisons, however; they do not have enough resources to provide specific care plans or treatment for prisoners with mental illness. It is true that they do have care plans, but they are mostly general care plans designed to have a patient take his medications at specific times. It's like going to a dermatologist for brain tumor treatment; we can be sure that the dermatologist knows something about brain tumors but it's not his specialty so he can't give you the best care. Prisons were built for punishing and rehabilitating criminals, not for the psychological treatment of mentally ill inmates. Some criminals, due to some loophole in our law, are able to plead insanity and are able to get away with it even if they don't have any mental illness. But people with mental disorders are being punished for things that they did because of a psychosis they can't control. That is why it's classified as an "illness" and it has to be treated like any other medical condition. The only places that we can get treated are medical/clinical facilities like hospitals and clinics. Illnesses to hospitals and crimes to prison. After some time, mentally ill patients are released from prisons if the medical personnel think that they are ready to be released back into society. However, as the documentary stated, most of them are released with only 2 weeks worth of medication and less than a hundred dollars in cash and are left to venture out in the outside world without any support groups. When people are released from mental hospitals, they usually get follow-up appointments, refills on medication or just someone to check on them after they get released, but when they get released from prisons it is basically "you're free to go and make sure you do what we told

you to do" and no follow ups. Typically, because of the lack of guidance, these people stop taking their medication because they feel better and think they are cured or they run out and have no resources to help get more. Mental hospitals usually have them come back for group sessions or a one-on-one session with a healthcare (or a psychiatrist) provider, while prisons do have that kind of system, it is just not as effective as what the mental hospital has to offer because they do not specialize in mental illness and the environment is really different. When they stop taking their medication, the cycle starts over again. Patients will usually have a relapse of their psychotic behavior, repeat previous criminal behavior, get arrested again and returned to prison. The documentary mentioned that most mentally ill patients released in Ohio were arrested again in a couple of months because of psychotic behavior. Once returned, the patient receives mental health care and becomes stable. This cycle dramatically shows what a good mental health program can do for severely mentally ill people, and what happens when there is no care available. How long will the mentally ill inmates go through the cycle? It is already proven (in numbers) that when they do not get guidance after they are released they will get arrested again. Mentally ill patients should receive care and treatment in mental hospitals, and not in prison. http://www.nami.org/template.cfm?section=about_mental_illness