

Health and illness in prison community

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The paper "Health and Illness in Prison Community" is a good example of a case study on nursing. The prison population in the United States can be described as one of the vulnerable groups that have continued to experience increased inequities in a whole range of issues, from lack of access to primary health care to minimal referrals for mental health conditions (Wilper et al., 2009). As demonstrated by these authors, the prisoners' access to health care and the quality of that care in American jail systems are often underprovided in spite of the fact that incarcerated individuals have a constitutional right to healthcare which is guaranteed in the Eighth Amendment. This paper provides a perception of health and illness among the community of prisoners incarcerated at Larry D. Smith Correctional Facility in Riverside County, California. It is indeed clear that these prisoners continue to lack adequate medical and mental health services to deal with problems of drug abuse and addiction (Mineau, 2014). Available literature demonstrates that "the prison population of the United States has quadrupled in the past 25 years and the country now incarcerates more people per capita than any other nation" (Wilper et al., 2009, p. 666). These authors further acknowledge that nearly 2.3 million individuals (or 750 per 100,000 people) are being held in U. S. jails and must depend on federal, state or local prison systems for health care. Larry D. Smith Correctional Facility has a capacity to hold 1,500 prisoners, with documented statistics demonstrating that Riverside County's five correctional facilities normally process an estimated 60,000 prisoners a year (McCarthy, 2012). While providing nursing services to the prison population at Larry D. Smith Correctional Facility, it came to my attention that there were adequate

medical and mental health services provided to incarcerated individuals going by the many healthcare services that were indicated as being on offer. However, it also came to my notice that despite all these efforts, there were no treatment and rehabilitation services for recovering drug addicts. The prevalence rates of substance abuse and the intensity of treatment need among imprisoned men at the county correctional facility were at an all-time high of between 40% and 60 % of the total prison population (Rounds-Bryant & Baker, 2007). Despite the elevated statistics, no proactive attempts were being done by the facility's administration or any other relevant stakeholders to introduce treatment and rehabilitation services for offenders with drug addiction problems. This is despite the fact the available literature shows that “ prison-based drug treatment is instrumental in reducing drug use and criminal behavior both during and following incarceration for treatment participants” (Rounds-Bryant & Baker, 2007, p. 557). From the ongoing, it is justifiable to argue that the stereotyping of drug addicts that they were not in need of treatment services during incarceration contributed to the worsening of their mental health conditions. Health inequities can be described as “ preventable and unjust differences in health status experienced by certain population groups” (Smith, 2014, p. 562). In the described scenario, the health inequity that was observed was increasingly poor mental health outcomes for incarcerated men with drug addiction problems. The problem was that the correctional facility had effective treatment services for offenders with various mental health challenges, but failed to recognize drug addiction as a major mental health issue due to stereotyping. The end result was that most of the offenders with drug

addiction problems continued to suffer in silence as their counterparts with known psychotic disorders benefited from treatment and rehabilitation services on offer. Such a situation, in my view, was unjust since drug addiction is largely considered a mental health issue. This paper has provided a perception of health and illness among the community of prisoners incarcerated at Larry D. Smith correctional facility in Riverside County, California. Overall, it can be concluded that stereotyping made it possible for prisoners with drug addiction problems within the facility to suffer the health inequity related to the accessibility of medical and mental health services.