

Sick Again

Illness is a common problem among prisoners. We all get sick. It is impossible to avoid all the ailments that infect the population. Inmates have many strategies to keep from catching diseases. Still, total health is unattainable in this environment. I have succumbed to the germs around me.

I have a cold. I got it within a couple of weeks of recovering from a virus. This predicament leads me to take a pen in hand. I hope to enlighten you to some of the causes for my physical distress. Taking precautions does not guarantee wellness in here.

I work hard to stay healthy. I try to eat correctly and to drink a lot of water. Exercise and getting plenty of rest are part of my routine. Along with these disciplines I follow the inmates illness prevention plan. These unofficial behaviors are common to experienced detainees. We train ourselves to incorporate them into daily life. Actions like washing hands often, using disinfectant liberally and minimizing physical contact are included in our efforts. Do you wonder why we still become ill? Three reasons why we get sick are the crowded condition, poor health care and lack of proper nutrition in prison.

The crowded condition is the first reason why we get sick in prison. It is a fact that germs spread in closed environments. When inmates are crammed together it is impossible to prevent the spread of disease. This situation is true in other places where large bodies of people congregate. Bacterium are spread through sharing the same air space, personal contact and a connection with common surfaces.

An illness usually gets introduced into the population through direct contact with a carrier. It happens when a guard or support staff member reports to work while being sick. Another common situation is when someone receives a visit from an infectious person. Once the initial exposure occurs the disease spreads quickly to many people within the facility. Medical attention is usually given ineffectively because of the large mass of prisoners.

Poor health care is the second reason why we get sick in prison. The response to an inmates complaint of having symptoms often takes days. In the mean time he is required to attend all assignments and ducats. What this translates to is he must continue his routine inspite of being ill. If any of us refuse to attend school or work without a medical lay-in we are disciplined. The resulting actions against us can even prevent our eventual release from prison. The consequence of this mismanaged care is further spreading of the contagion.

Lack of proper nutrition is the third reason why we get sick in prison. The food we eat is often misprepared. For example, vegetables are overcooked eliminating their nutritional value. Other dishes get served even when they are inedible. The results of these and other deficiencies are a poor diet. Some inmates can afford to purchase their own food and vitamins. Most have to go without these luxuries. The results of inferior meals is a compromised immune system. When our bodies defences are weak it is reasonable to assume illness will ensue.

Inmates deal with illness continually. The very nature of our environment causes us to be susceptible to disease. No matter what steps we take to prevent it our efforts are stymied. We face contagions that infect us. The crowded condition, poor health care and lack of nutrition in prison are three reasons why we get sick. My hope is that you will now understand some of the difficulties we face. Can you see us as more than chattel that need to be housed? Do you believe we should receive better treatment? If you do, please let it be known.

Patrick Rath sack T-45624
M.C.S.P. C-14-232 low
P.O. BOX 409060
IONE, CA. 95640