

Forced to Die Alone III:
the continuing saga at MCI Shirley

Over the last year I have authored two other "Forced to die alone" articles that highlighted the conditions prisoners are forced to deal with when housed in the "Skilled Nursing Facility" (SNF) at MCI Shirley. Of course that is not the only article my colleague and I have written that has caused much controversy and I can assure you it will not be the last. Which brings me to this latest article that I feel needs to be addressed.

Much has been said about the Companions who work in the SNF, and deservedly so. The prisoners who work as Companions and are there for the right reasons are the minority. Those few, those very few who are doing the right thing - not by me or Karen DiNardo - but by God, are truly following their conscience in their treatment of patients. The rest are up there chasing skirts, money and extra meals.

Some of the people who seem to be lost in all this are the nurses that really do care. Their commitment to stand up to adversity and maintain their character in the face of insurmountable odds is a testament to their upbringing and strength of character. Unfortunately, much of it is overshadowed by the repugnant attitudes of staff and companions alike.

Why am I so hard on companions? Because, for all they do, the Companion Program has become a hospital version of Stepford Wives. Everything is perfect and clean. The patients are treated with such compassion that nothing is as it seems in the SNF. Anyone who believes that, believes Amelia Earhart, Jimmy Hoffa and Jim Morrison are on a secluded island reclining with margaritas in hand. The Companion Program is a failure because instead of progressing toward newer ideas and better care, the program has become stagnant. As with all DOC programs it is simply a band-aid made to look as if all is well.

The wards are cleaned; hallways waxed and buffed; a T.V. room is formed and a terrace erected, all in an effort to disguise the true nature of gross negligence that transpires in the bowels of the SNF. Where staff such as C.O. Power(less) emotionally and psychologically abuses patients housed in her area. She allows certain Companions to steal from prisoners she considers 'undesirable' and then covers it up with claims that, "the patients don't know what they are talking about". She reads the patients cases so that all can hear what a patient is in for. She revels in the fact that she can deny other patients from visiting their friends in other rooms. "Visit them in the T.V. room", she snidely remarks. She takes great pleasure in knowing that she has inflicted harm on someone.

Right behind her is Deputy Karen DiNardo, who touts the SNF as her pet project, yet, denies prisoners who truly want to work as a Companion. Men who will be there for the right reasons! But her greatest feather in her cap is when she denied prisoners from

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Population the opportunity to visit their sick and dying friends. One of the reasons for her denial was, '...medical issues which may be passed on by visitors to be infirmed...' (Note to all prisoners being released, hospitals in the real world no longer allow visits for that reason.) Imagine that! I wonder how many people in society would stand for that as loved ones languished in a hospital ward and they cannot visit them?

Yet, the Companion Program is a successful invention. As long as prisoners continue to drink the kool-aid put forth from the DOC, then forget Compassionate Release or Hospice Care. The Companion Program is all you need. Forget about being treated in a humane and dignified manner, because as long as you settle for sub-care treatment, you will be forced to die alone while Companions divvy your property among themselves.

Told To

About the Author

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