

H A R L A N   R I C H A R D S

February 13, 2017

K.O.P. Medication

In Wisconsin prisons, Keep On Person (K.O.P.) Medications are those items issued by Health Services Unit (HSU) which prisoners are permitted to keep in their cells and self-administer. In Stanley, everything seems difficult to accomplish and even the process of passing out KOP meds is challenging.

When I first arrived here, prisoners obtained refills of their KOP meds by submitting a request to HSU. A couple of days later the meds would be sent down to the unit and passed out when the dayroom opened in the morning.

Someone in the administration decided that there was a better way to do this. For the last year or so, we have been required to submit a request, watch for our name to come up on a pick-up list and go to HSU to pick up our KOP meds at the scheduled time (8:30 am or 5:45 pm). Many guys picked up their meds in the morning and carried them to work with them.

A few weeks ago, a new memo informed us that meds would once again be sent down to the units on third shift for distribution and we would no longer have to go to HSU to get KOP meds. Only this time, there was no mention of when prisoners would be given their meds. Apparently, it was left to officer's discretion. In my unit, this discretion resulted in the officer going around at 3:00 am waking guys up to give them their meds. In other units, some officers merely went back to the old way - passing out meds after the dayroom opened at 6:00 am.

I wrote to one of the captains who issued the memo asking him if I could expect to get my meds at 3:00 am every time I ordered them. He responded by telling me they should be passed out before midnight. That doesn't do me much good because I always go to bed at 10:00 pm.

I decided to make the best of it. On the night I expected to receive meds, I placed my chair in front of the door so I could tell the officer to put them on the chair and perhaps then I wouldn't have to get out of bed to get them. Well, it worked as planned but perhaps not because of my efforts. My cellmate just happened to be using the toilet when the officer came to our door. I think this surprised him so he just dropped the meds on the chair and shut the door. The irony in this

new system they have is that even though they pass out the meds on third shift (waking us up to do so) they hold the copies of our KOP med requests until the next morning and pass them out at the desk.

My cellmate wrote to HSU and told them to cancel all of his prescriptions because of the procedure they were using to pass them out. HSU staff responded by telling him that KOP meds would no longer be passed out on third shift. We are right back to the original procedure.

I'd like to be able to have a moral to this story or show how good triumphed or evil or something to give it all meaning. But, alas, it just shows how silly and irrational prison administrators are. Since all of them are promoted from within, it's not possible to get new ideas, new rational ways of doing things. We will always be at the mercy of bureaucrats who got their power just by being in the right place at the right time. Some administrators are great at what they do. Others leave much to be desired. The DOC needs a meritocracy where the best of the best is recruited from outside the DOC as well as inside. Only in that manner will we get a rational and compassionate correctional system.