

Date: 2/27/2020 10:49:31 AM

Subject: Blog

HARLAN RICHARDS

February 27, 2020

Norovirus In Stanley Prison

The prison has been on restricted movement this week because there is currently an outbreak of norovirus in one of the units.

Unit 5B, which is the "Veterans" wing, has had numerous cases of norovirus. For those of you who don't know, norovirus causes severe puking and diarrhea for a few days. It almost seems like food poisoning. It is passed by contact with vomit or feces. In other words, the only way it can be passed on is if a person who has it doesn't wash his or her hands.

Last week we had a fundraiser where we purchased fried chicken - \$6.50 for ½ chicken and 2 dinner rolls. The sale was sponsored by the Vets who also passed out all the chicken to the prisoners - one housing unit per day. At the end of the week, many Vets were ill. Can you guess how norovirus was introduced into the prison?

Now, I'm not a rocket scientist but if I had to bet on where the virus came from, I'd bet on the boxes of chicken. If so, that means someone who handled the chicken had norovirus AND poor hygiene habits (remember, you have to have direct contact with poop or vomit to be infected). The infected person didn't wash his or her hands after using the toilet.

Once you have the virus on your hands, it's going to be awfully hard not to get infected. Even if you wash your hands regularly, the virus can live on surfaces so you can pick it up by touching a common surface. We have to sign in and out when we go from building to building. There are pens attached to the clipboards that everyone uses and that no one disinfects.

On Tuesday, I was called to Health Services Unit (HSU). I figured it must be important if I was summoned during a norovirus outbreak. Alas, it was for an annual TB screening. I asked the LPN why she scheduled me during the outbreak. She said she was just doing her job and the outbreak was no reason to stop. She must have missed the memo about the entire prison being shut down. I pointed out that calling me to HSU for a noncritical appointment needlessly put me at risk of getting infected. She just didn't comprehend. What's the point of restricted movement if I'm required to go to unnecessary appointments?

As long as I don't get infected, they can keep us locked down for another week. I have plenty of things to keep me busy.