Care of the Previously Incarcerated Patient

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Case

- Mr. G is a 56 year old male recently released from state prison after 12 years of incarceration.
- Mr. G has type 2 diabetes, hypertension and hyperlipidemia. In prison he recently had a colonoscopy for rectal bleeding, but never received the results. Even though he still has bleeding, he isn’t worried since in prison the staff told him “no news is good news.”
- He was released from prison 6 weeks ago. He is here for a refill of his medications, which ran out over 2 weeks ago. He was taking several medications, some of which he can’t remember their names.

Incarceration in the U.S.
Health care in U.S. prisons
Transitioning to the community
In your clinic
Jail vs. Prison

**Jail**  
Innocent until proven guilty  
Awaiting trial  
Short terms

**Prison**  
After trial and sentencing  
Parole violation

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**Incarceration in the U.S.**

- 2.3 million people in prisons and jails
- Highest per capita incarceration rate in the world 750/100k
- More than one in every 100 adults is now incarcerated
- 1 in 37 adults have been incarcerated

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Incarceration in the U.S.

Lifetime chance of incarceration

- Black males: 1 in 3
- Latino males: 1 in 6
- White males: 1 in 17

Demographics of Incarceration

- 93% male, 7% female
- 38% black
- 20% Latino
- 34% white
- Average age: 36

Incarceration in California

- 173,000 current; 302,000 total per year
- Commitment rate: 456/100,000
- 32,400 life sentence, 660 condemned
- Offenses: 50% persons, 21% drugs, 21% property
- Avg. sentence: 4.5 years, 2 years served
- Reading level: 7th grade

Chart: Adult correctional populations, 1980-2008

- Probation
- Prison
- Parole
- Jail

Sources:
- California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. Fall 2007 Adult Populations Projections.
Incarceration In The US

- 1974-2001: number incarcerated for the first time *tripled*

Incarceration
Impact on Family and Community

- 2.4 million children have a parent in prison or jail

- ½ of male children whose parent has been incarcerated will also be incarcerated

- Rite of passage

Adoption & Safe Families Act of 1997

States are required to terminate the parental rights of children who have been in foster care for 15 of the last 22 months

The median sentence imposed for a non-violent drug offense is 36 months too long to prevent a child from being permanently removed from their incarcerated parent(s).
**Burden of Disease: Mental Illness**

- 700,000 people with severe mental illness are admitted to U.S. jails and prisons each year
- NYC and LA county jails are the largest inpatient psych units in the country
- Mentally ill inmates report longer criminal histories than other inmates

**Incarceration and Mental Illness: US**

- 1970: 500,000 State Psychiatric Hospital Beds
- 1999: 1,200,000 Prison & Jails
- 1970: 100,000 State Psych Beds
- 1999: 100,000 Prison & Jails

**Substance Abuse**

- **1985** 13% → **1990** 32% Newly sentenced state prisoners convicted of drug offenses
- 65-80% of prisoners with history substance use and abuse
- Only 25-33% with history of treatment for substance abuse
High Risk Behaviors and Exposures

- Unprotected sexual activity
- IV drug use
- Tattooing
- Violence
- Sexual Assault

Chronic Disease

- On screening 1088 patients at intake at one California prison: 37% with chronic disease
- Age cutoff for geriatrics 55 years old
- Increased prevalence of chronic diseases

Chronic Disease

Higher prevalence than general population:
- Hypertension
- Asthma
- Arthritis
- Cervical Cancer
- Hepatitis

Communicable Diseases

- 1997: 20-26% of all HIV-infected people served time
- 30% of inmates in SF jail facilities with latent TB
- 25-42% prevalence of hepatitis C in state prison
- STD rates for females range between 5.4-35% in jails


Prisoners are one of the only groups in this country with a constitutional right to health care.

[The] principles [behind the guarantee against cruel and unusual punishment] establish the government’s obligation to provide medical care for those whom it is punishing by incarceration. An inmate must rely on prison authorities to treat his medical needs; if the authorities fail to do so, those needs will not be met.

US Supreme Court,
Estelle v. Gamble (1976)

Plata v. Schwarzenegger

Largest ever prison class action lawsuit in the US

Prisoners alleged that California officials inflicted cruel and unusual punishment by being deliberately indifferent to serious medical needs.

Settlement agreement 2002:

Requires the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to completely overhaul its medical care policies and procedures
Challenges - Prison Health Care

- Medical provider isolation
- Limited access to consultation
- Culture of low self esteem
- Institutionalized low standards of care
- No chronic care model or training
- Prisons not designed for health care
- Conflict of values in custodial setting

Prison Industry: US Expenditures

1987: $10.6 billion
2007: $44 billion

California
$8.8 billion
$2 billion health care

More Prisoners Returning Home

- Large number of inmates to be released in the next 2 years
  - 43,000 court mandated
- Weak California economy
  - Poor county resources
  - Decrease medical services in prison, medical parole
  - $250 million cut in rehabilitative programs for 2009-2010
Transitioning Health Care

- 11 million people are released from prison and jail each year
- Given a limited supply of medication
- Little or no follow-up available in the community
- No discharge planning from prison
- Increased morbidity and mortality

Release from Prison

High Risk of Death for Former Inmates

Retrospective cohort study of 30,237 released inmates

- 12.7 times increased risk of death in first 2 weeks after release.
- 3.5 times increased risk of death in first 2 years.

The leading cause of death: drug overdose, cardiovascular disease, homicide and suicide.

Reintegration Difficulties

- **Employment**: Unable to apply for certain jobs including all forms of public employment
- **Public Assistance**: Prohibited from collecting food stamps, WIC, Pell grants, federal student aid
- **Medical Assistance**: Lapse in Medicaid
- **Housing**: Prohibited from public housing

Disenfranchisement

- 48 states and the District of Columbia prohibit felons from voting while serving a sentence.
- 35 states prohibit felons on parole/probation
- 12 states disenfranchise all ex-offenders
- 4 million Americans have currently or permanently lost their voting rights due to a felony
- 13% of all black men have lost their right to vote.
You are seeing a patient with history of incarceration. . .

Case

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Case

- How do you approach this patient?

- What information do you need to know?

- What screening tests if any do you need to perform?
Obtaining an Incarceration History

- When and where the person was incarcerated
- Amount of time spent in prison/jail
- Charges (relation to drugs, violence, or sex work)
- Past probation or parole
- Any current probation or parole and the specific conditions of probation or parole
- Number of previous incarcerations

Obtaining an Incarceration History

- Access to health care during incarceration
- Substance Abuse while incarcerated
- Tattoos while incarcerated
- Sexual Activity
- Violence
- Sexual Violence

Screening

Screen for history of:

- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- substance abuse
- mental illness
- PTSD, depression, suicidal ideation
- gang involvement

Screening

Screen for:

- Tuberculosis
- Hepatitis
- Syphilis
- HIV
- other sexually transmitted infections
Social History

- Housing
- Employment
- Safety
- Relationships with family/partners/children
- Support system
- Healthcare coverage

Obtaining Medical Record

- Call the local prison/jail
- Call the parole office
- Obtain the name of the patient’s health care provider
- Educate your patient about obtaining health records
- Call outside hospitals for hospitalization records or special studies

Obtaining Medical Records

Federal:
http://www.projectsalam.org/medrecords.doc

State: (California)
916-229-0475 (phone)
916-229-0002 (fax)
**Include patient’s prison number

Referrals

- Social worker for reinstatement of Medicaid, expungement of criminal record, federal/state aid for housing and food stamps
- Vocational rehabilitation
- Tattoo removal
- Substance abuse treatment
- Mental health services
**Action Plan**

- Establish goals for preventing recidivism and preventing incarceration in other family members, especially children.

**Summary**

- Increasing numbers of people are returning from prison and jail to our communities
- Incarcerated populations have higher burdens of substance abuse, mental illness, chronic and infectious diseases.
- Primary care providers will be increasingly providing care to formerly incarcerated individuals and their families.
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