

Ulla Pape | Heino Stöver | Ingo Ilja Michels [Eds.]

Social Work and Health in Prisons

Studies from Central Asia and China



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Foreword

Worldwide, over 11 million people are held in prisons and other closed settings on any given day. Due to substandard prison conditions and healthcare in many parts of the world, the health of incarcerated people is often worse upon release than upon entry.

Being deprived of liberty does not mean being deprived of fundamental human rights including freedom from torture and other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment, and the right to health and healthcare of the same standard as available in the community.

An ongoing challenge in treating all people in prison with respect for their inherent dignity and value as human beings, as enshrined in the United Nations' Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules), is prison overcrowding.

High occupancy levels within prison facilities are conducive to misconduct, infractions and violence, and contribute to higher transmission rates of infection including HIV, tuberculosis and viral hepatitis – and recently, COVID-19 – than in the community. Overcrowding also means that the often already limited human, financial and medical resources are too thinly spread to be able to ensure prisoners' physical and mental health and integrity, let alone support rehabilitation and social reintegration.

Establishing a sustainable health strategy in prison starts with political commitment to implement criminal justice and penal reform such as non-custodial measures and reducing prison overcrowding. It includes integrating prison health into public health to expand the pool of healthcare resources and expertise and improve prison health standards.

Such a strategy also involves upscaling data collection and analysis of infection rates, gender-specific needs, mental health and drug use disorders, education levels, vocational skills, and the availability and accessibility of responsive services. And last but not least, it requires the meaningful engagement of civil society organizations as essential partners in addressing the health and rehabilitation prospects of people in prison.

This work details how regions in Central Asia have been addressing challenges and making progress in implementing global prison standards, with instructive country examples.

Foreword

We hope that this publication will help relevant authorities to improve living conditions and access to treatment and care for people in prison, in line with international standards to promote and protect the health and rights of this vulnerable population.

Ehab Salab, MD

Advisor for Prisons and HIV

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

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Hang Su, PhD, is a postdoc at the Shanghai Mental Health Center, majoring in psychiatry and mental health. Hang Su has been engaged in the basic and clinical research of drug dependence and substance addiction, and learn knowledge about addiction medicine, psychology, epidemiology and sociology since 2011. Hang Su has successively participated in a series of research projects including the key research and development plan of the Ministry of Science and Technology of the People's Republic of China, the key project of the National Natural Science Foundation, the regional joint fund of the National Natural Science Foundation, and the major special project of the Shanghai Municipal Commission of Science and Technology, focusing on the brain electrophysiological characteristics, brain imaging mechanism, and new physical intervention of the psychological craving for substance abuse. As the project leader, he has successively undertaken one youth project of the National Natural Science Foundation and one general project of China Postdoctoral Fund. Over 20 papers have been published in the past five years, including 13 SCI papers published by the first author/co-first author). At present, he is a member of the Addiction Medicine Branch of the China Association for the Prevention and Control of Drug Abuse and the Addiction and Brain Science Branch of the China Association for the Prevention and Control of Drug Abuse.

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