

Incarceration: An Unrecognized Public Health Crisis

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Background & Methods: In conjunction with systematic literature review, decades of research, six hundred and seventy-two former prisoners were interviewed shortly after release from incarceration.

Multiple variables experienced while incarcerated were reviewed. Animal models around overcrowding and sustained levels of stress were also considered. The neurological underpinnings and relatedness to the concept of "hypervigilance," thought to be an effective survival technique, and PTSD were comprehensively researched.

Hypervigilance is a well regarded survival technique which is likened to the marine in a forward foxhole who hears a twig snap in the middle of the night and responds directly and decisively. The loading placed on the neuronal pathways and related brain regions is seen as a precursor to PTSD and otherwise burdensome to the over stimulated nervous system attempting to maintain an emotional equilibrium.

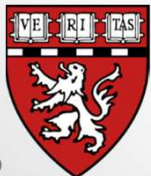
Results: A particular area of inquiry was around the presence of early parental/adult absence, recognized as a precursor to Complex PTSD (World Health Organization, ICD 11). But not delineated in DSM 5 (American Psychiatric Association).

Significant rates of PTSD symptoms were identified in individuals experiencing early developmental trauma.

All subjects met the criteria for Subthreshold PTSD at a minimum, and others (193) Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. Complex PTSD was descriptive of the findings of 179 of 193 subjects diagnosed with PTSD. These findings suggest that preexisting subthreshold Complex PTSD prior to incarceration predicts development of Complex PTSD while incarcerated.

Conclusion: The social cost of American "Corrections" incubates PTSD and sub threshold PTSD, releasing to society individuals more at risk to themselves and society than prior to the "Correctional" experience is incalculable.

A philosophical reconsideration of the American "Correctional" experience at this time is long overdue. This philosophy is grounded on the concepts of "Incapacitation; Punishment and Deterrence," vs. the European model generally of "Rehabilitation and Reintegration".



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