



F33 Ethics and Dental Cares in Prison

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The goal of this presentation is to evaluate the dental health of inmates. Ten years after a change of legislation, this work outlines the benefits and the drawbacks of the current legislation, and the resulting consequences in dental practice. The study also shows that the specific environment of the prison can create some unique difficulties especially ethical problems.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by describing the functioning of French prisons, ethical problems, and possible answers encountered in this unique dental practice.

In 1994, in France, a new legislation was enacted related to the health of detainees. The purpose of this legislation was to give the prisoners the same access to care as the general population. The system was moved from private practice to public practice by the hospitals. Before 1994, the medical staff in French jails was a private staff paid by the ministry of Justice. Employees were sometimes subordinate to the prison administration and this often conflicted with patient/doctor confidentiality. Moreover, the physicians and the dentists were not present often enough in the jails to give sufficient care.

Since 1994, the medical staff working inside the prisons is employed by the hospital. The hospital organization has significantly improved the number of dental visits to inmates. The quality of care has been improved also because the hospital provides the necessary financial means. Sterilization procedures and decontamination have been updated to avoid transmissible diseases and resulting potential trials. The equipment is now quite adequate but the human resources remain insufficient. The situation has improved since 1994 but some problems remain.

The French jails are generally overpopulated. In the jails of Lille, located in the north of France, the percentage of overpopulation is more than 200% (1,100 detainees for 470 places). This problem causes a delay in the care provided because of a lack of dentists even with the assistance students from the dental university. The dental care, as with other medical services, is free to the French detainees and the requests for dental care are many. Another problem is that some prisons house men, women, and under age detainees. These different populations must be kept separate which adds to the burden of the medical personnel. Inmates isolated for medical reasons or punishment can encounter difficulties coming to the dental offices. So, inside the jail, access to dental care is not the same for all. The high number of drug addicted inmates is another important consideration. Because these inmates generally have very bad oral health, they need additional visits.

After considering the different ethical problems encountered in a prison dental practice in prison, some answers to resolve them are proposed.

Prison, Odontology, Ethics