

Cognitive Functioning and Incarcerated Females: Influence on the Perceived Health and Quality of Life of Aging Females in the Correctional System

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OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH

Aging inmates are growing both in population and proportion (Snyder et al., 2009).

Aging prisoners are at a high risk of developing dementia (Brooke & Jackson, 2019).

Little research has been done on aging prisoners and cognitive decline (Brooke & Jackson, 2019).

Most research completed has been on male prisoners, female prisoners mostly unresearched.

The number of incarcerated females has increased more than 800% since 1980 (Golembowski et al., 2020).

Female prisoners over the age of 55 are the fastest growing age group of female prisoners (Schach et al., 2021).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE - INTRODUCTION

The increase in the number of individuals aging behind bars necessitates research (Snyder et al., 2009).

Aging prisoners have special physical, social, and psychological needs (Snyder et al., 2009).

Aging prisoners are more susceptible to becoming victimized (Turner et al., 2018).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE - PHYSICAL HEALTH

Overall health of prisoners is usually worse than those who are not incarcerated (Combalbert et al., 2018).

Prisoners tend to age faster than the general population (Stürup-Tof et al., 2018).

Prison is not an advantageous environment for healthy resources and behaviors (Combalbert et al., 2018).

Prisoners lack access to:

- Nutritious food;
- Physical activity; and
- Proper sleep hygiene (Combalbert et al., 2018).

Inaccessibility puts aging prisoners at a much higher risk for developing dementia (Maschi et al., 2012).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE - SERVICES, POLICIES, AND COMPASSIONATE RELEASE

There is a major need for gerontological-based prison services and professionals (Snyder et al., 2009).

Prison professionals, as well as other inmates, need to be able to identify and support those prisoners exhibiting dementia and dementia-related symptoms (Brooke & Jackson, 2019).

Areas with a critical need for policy changes in the prison system:

Behavior and health changes that occur during dementia

Punishment of prisoners with dementia (Brooke & Jackson, 2019)

Compassionate release from prison allows eligible prisoners to die outside of prison and eases the resource strain on the prison system (Holland et al., 2020).

Prisoners who are at least 50 years old have 15% re-arrest rate, compared to a 41% recidivism rate for all federal prisoners. Furthermore, those released through the compassionate release program had the lowest recidivism rate of all at 3.5% (Nolan Center for Justice, 2022).

Very few older prisoners over age 65 are released from prison before they die (Nolan Center for Justice, 2022).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE - ENVIRONMENTAL AND HOUSING NEEDS

There is a need for segregated or separated housing (Wangmo et al., 2015).

More long-term care living arrangements are needed (Linder & Meyers, 2009).

Palliative care and hospice care are needed in prisons (Snyder et al., 2009).

Additional environmental needs:

- Size of beds and softness or pressure of mattresses
- Facility accessibility (e.g., stairs, space sizes)
- Increased access to showering and bathing facilities (Turner et al., 2018)



REVIEW OF LITERATURE - SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

Prison systems make it almost impossible for prisoners to successfully meet their aging needs and care (Clemmitt, 2017).

Both health and quality of life are affected when a person is incarcerated (Haney, 2001).

The quality of life of prisoners has been a long-ignored topic of research (Maschi et al., 2012).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE - SOCIAL SUPPORT

Social support is important to overall health.

In one study, over 70% of prisoners reported feelings of loneliness, feeling unloved, or depressive symptoms (Aday, 2005).

Rebuilding and maintaining family ties are important for older prisoners (Wangmo et al., 2015).

For some prisoners, fellow inmates become their family and these relationships need to be recognized as important (Linder & Meyers, 2009).

Strong support systems are associated with better health, including a lower risk of cognitive impairment (Murata et al., 2019).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

