

The Power of the Patient Voice: A Community-Engaged Approach to Carceral Health Curricula Development

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BACKGROUND

Many people who have experienced incarceration report sub-standard medical care in prison/jail and distrust in the healthcare system. Medical student knowledge, attitudes and preparedness to care for this population is generally low. The perspectives of people who have been incarcerated are essential in developing carceral health curricula as part of a community-engaged approach to anti-oppressive medicine.

METHODS

1. Design: Qualitative in-depth, semi-structured phone interviews
2. Participants: People who are formerly incarcerated
3. Interview question themes: 1) Healthcare experiences during & after incarceration; 2) advice on how physicians can provide better care for them
4. Data analysis: Inductive thematic analysis

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- ❖ Many people with a history of incarceration experience & witness medical harm in carceral settings and wish for better person-centered medical care in carceral and community settings.
- ❖ Incorporating their perspectives into medical curricula may help equip physicians to provide equitable, trauma-informed care and combat health disparities among this population.

1) Carceral culture as a barrier to person-centered healthcare

“When you see doctors or medical staff come to prison, at first some of them would be so cool. But after a while they get cynical, and I don't know if that's because they're talked to by the guards, or it's just dealing with us as prisoners... It becomes...maybe a bit more confrontational.”

2) Internalizing dismissive attitudes from prison healthcare

“I really tried not going [to medical] because even if you had the flu, they'd say it's no big deal. You know, you're not dying, so. That's their attitude.”

3) Trans & non-binary discrimination in prisons

“[Doctors have said] I'm confused about my own gender, so like, how can I know what I'm talking about? You know? Like I'm gonna be confused about my pain.”

4) Advice on caring for patients with a history of incarceration

“There are doctors that have their own prejudices and...don't want to take care of you...because you are an ex-prisoner... But I feel that treating them with humanity and letting them know that regardless of the circumstances that you came from, that I'm here to take of people.”

5) Self-advocacy in prison

“When I was in jail and I saw how people were being treated as far as getting the medicine that they required...I was mad, too. I was mad at the system, and I just started writing a lot of grievances.”