

End-of-life Care in the Prison Environment (Supplement #5)

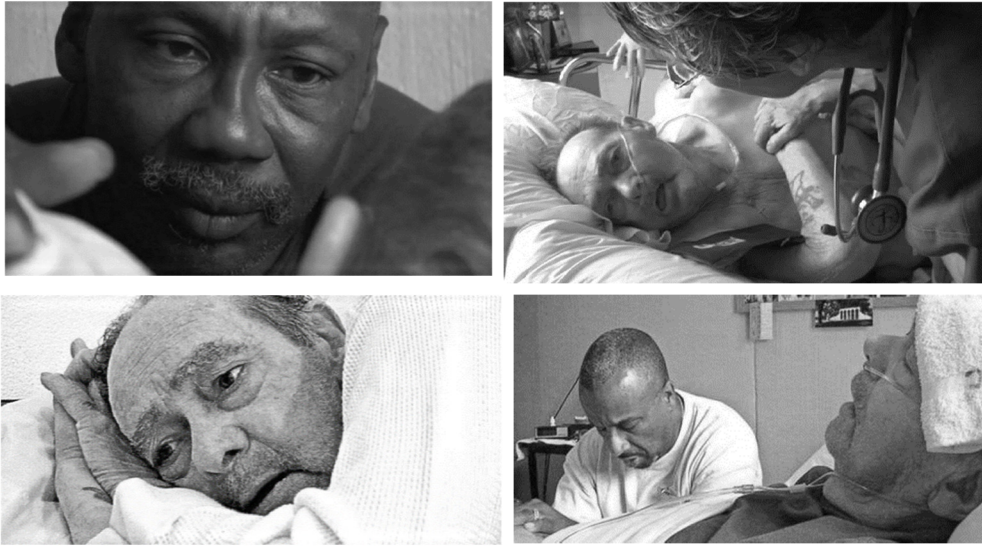


Photo Source: Prison Terminal (with permission)

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THIS SUPPLEMENT LISTS SELECTED ARTICLES, REPORTS., ETC., published in the literature and in the news media in recent months. The last 'Backgrounder,' dated 1 August 2022, can be downloaded from the Palliative Care Network website at: <https://bit.ly/3JkYGVg>. Download Supplements #1, #2 & #3 (July, September, November 2023) at: <https://bit.ly/3QGRyXC>. Download Supplement #4 (January 2024) at: <https://bit.ly/2RdegnL>.

[Aging Prison Populations](#)

Older prisoners: A challenge for Australian corrections

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF CRIMINOLOGY | Online – Updated 12 February 2024 – Corrections statistics in Australia indicate a clear trend towards increased numbers of older prisoners, and the growth of this inmate group is paralleled in prisons in the United States, United Kingdom and New Zealand. Older prisoner populations present a number of challenges for governments, correctional administrators, healthcare providers and community agencies. This paper looks at the issue of defining the older prisoner and explores the rise in older inmate populations throughout Australia... The concerns pertaining to the management of older prisoners are examined, including the costs of responding to rising healthcare needs... **Full text:** <https://www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi426>



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“Send elderly prisoners to secure care homes”

INSIDE TIME (U.K.) | Online – 7 February 2024 – [The] governor of HMP Glenochil in Scotland, says that over 700 prisoners out of a total of 8,000 in Scotland are aged over 60, and that 50 out of the 730 in her prison have personalised healthcare requirements. There has been a significant increase in recent years in the numbers from this age group in jails throughout the U.K... Elderly men in jail may require help with mobility such as wheelchairs and hoists, or with dressing and feeding. “We were not built with an ageing population in mind... We don’t have enough accessible cells and need to think about something like secure care homes instead. We have people whose needs are wider than can be met in a secure prison regime.” **Full text:** <https://insidetime.org/newsround/send-elderly-prisoners-to-secure-care-homes/>

Prisoners “die of natural causes at 67”

INSIDE TIME (U.K.) | Online – 6 February 2024 – Prisoners recorded as dying of “natural causes” do so at a median age of 67. The figure compares with a median age of death of 86 in the general population...¹ Whilst the healthcare needs of prisoners is the same as for people in the community, provision of healthcare is not. [There’s a call for] improvements across the board, from health assessments and monitoring, to how prison staff are trained to recognise and deal with acute deterioration in inmates. **Full text:** <https://insidetime.org/newsround/prisoners-die-of-natural-causes-at-67/>

U.K. prison population projections

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE | Online – 29 February 2024 – ‘Prison Population Projections: 2023 to 2028’ This annual release presents prison population projections for England and Wales and is produced to aid policy development, capacity planning and resource allocation within the Ministry of Justice and His Majesty’s Prison & Probation Service. **Download report at:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/prison-population-projections-2023-to-2028>

1. ‘Prisoners die from natural causes 20 years earlier than the general population, finds review,’ *British Medical Journal*, January 2024. **Abstract:** <https://www.bmj.com/content/384/bmj.q198>

N.B. The authors cite ‘The National Confidential Enquiry into Patient Outcome and Death: Inside Prison Healthcare,’ National Confidential Enquiry into Patient Outcome & Death, 2024. **Download report at:** https://www.ncepod.org.uk/2024prisonhealthcare/Inside%20Healthcare_full%20report.pdf

Aging behind bars: How should we address the unseen crisis of dementia in prison?

AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION NEWS | Online – 4 February 2024 – For those of us working in prison settings, be it as staff or researchers, it’s increasingly hard to ignore a trend happening the world over: both in Australia and overseas there are more older people in prisons. To be clear, this doesn’t mean there are suddenly hundreds of 80-somethings being incarcerated. The reasons for an aging prisoner population are multi-faceted and complex, but what we do know is that an aging prisoner population brings challenges in managing aged-related illnesses in correctional settings. It also raises some serious questions about how we treat those who are incarcerated. **Full text:** <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/aging-behind-bars-dementia-in-prison/103427206>

Dementia care pathways in prisons: A comprehensive scoping review

BMC HEALTH & JUSTICE | Online – 20 January 2024 – There are difficulties across the prison system [in England and Wales] for people with dementia... A lack of resources, and national and regional policies, are identified as important barriers, although a number of solutions are also identified in the literature, including the development of locally tailored policies and increased collaboration with the voluntary sector. To the authors’ knowledge, this is the most comprehensive and inclusive review of the literature on dementia care pathways in prison to date. **Full text:** <https://healthandjusticejournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40352-023-00252-7>

Incarcerating elderly people does nothing to advance public safety

VERA INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE (U.S.) | Online – 17 January 2024 – One study found less than 1% of people older than 65 released on parole from New York State prisons in 2018 returned to prison for a new conviction in the three years following their release. This statistic is one datapoint among reams of research showing that people typically “age out” of crime. Far too many older people – who pose a miniscule threat to public safety – are being left to age and die in prisons around the U.S. Decades “tough-on-crime” policies mandate excessive sentences for most crimes, driving mass incarceration and devastating communities without any benefit. Prisons across the country are filled with large populations of aging people. **Full text:** <https://www.vera.org/news/no-one-should-be-sentenced-to-die-in-prison>

[Prison Healthcare Services](#)

Redefining healthcare behind bars: A deep dive into Germany’s prison medicine

MEDRIVA | Online – 2 March 2024 – The general consensus on prison healthcare often tilts towards imagery of inadequacy and restriction... Contrary to prevalent myths, prisoners in Germany are entitled to healthcare benefits that mirror the standard insurance coverage outside prison walls. As society grapples with the complexities of incarceration and healthcare, the lessons learned from Germany’s prison medical service highlight the importance of compassion, innovation, and a relentless pursuit of equity. In the end, the health of those behind bars is inextricably linked to the health of the community at large, **Full text:** <https://medriva.com/news/healthcare-policy/redefining-healthcare-behind-bars-a-deep-dive-into-germanys-prison-medicine-with-marc-lehmann>

Call to end shackling of hospitalised palliative prisoner patients

MEDICAL JOURNAL OF AUSTRALIA | Online – 29 February 2024 – In the face of an ageing prison population, there is growing pressure for correctional health staff to provide end-of-life care for the incarcerated. This article evaluates the literature and examines the practices surrounding the use of shackles and restraints in palliative prisoner patients cared for in the hospital setting. Although we recognise that the use of restraints is a reasonable strategy in certain circumstances to maintain community safety, it is not clear that age, illness or immobility are always factored into these decisions. International standards set out in the United Nations Mandela Rules clearly dictate that prisoners should be entitled to the same level of health care as the wider community. **Full text:** <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.5694/mja2.52240>

Related:

THE BULLETIN (Australia) | Online – 29 February 2024 – ‘**The right to healthcare continues when people are incarcerated.**’ International law requires that “prisoners should enjoy the same standards of health care that are available in the community.” This healthcare should be “free of charge” and “without discrimination.” It also makes clear that everyone has the right to the “highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.” **Full text:** <https://thebulletin.net.au/news/10896-victoria%E2%80%99s-prison-healthcare-system-should-match-community-healthcare>

Covid-19 in U.S. jails and prisons: Implications for the next public health crisis

BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL | Online – 19 February 2024 – People in the jails and prisons across the U.S. are often housed in abysmal and unlawful conditions that have dire consequences for health. From poorly designed built environments ... to stressful and unpredictable living quarters, to a lack of quality and timely healthcare, time spent in incarceration worsens peoples’ health. The current state of incarceration in the U.S. ... [is] ... a public health crisis. Rates of incarceration are high. Although the U.S. contains less than 5% of the global population, it accounts for 20% of the global incarcerated population. Incarceration disproportionately affects Black, Native American, and Latino people, contributing to racial health inequities. **Full text:** <https://www.bmj.com/content/384/bmj-2023-076975>

She pleaded for medical care in prison. By the time she got out, her cancer was untreatable

HUFFPOST (U.S.) | Online – 14 February 2024 – Susie Balfour first started noticing painful lumps in her breast almost 30 years ago. But imprisoned in Mississippi, Balfour didn't have access to much preventative or diagnostic health care. In 2021, days before she was released, a prison health care official confirmed what she had long feared: she had breast cancer. Once free, Balfour immediately underwent a bilateral mammogram and extensive testing to see what treatment options were available. She learned that the cancer had progressed to stage 4, spreading to both breasts, her lymph nodes and her thoracic spine. It was untreatable and terminal. **Full text:** https://www.huffpost.com/entry/mississippi-prison-withheld-cancer-diagnosis_n_65cc02a7e4b065628a612a57

Why medical students should learn about prison health

BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL | Online – 30 January 2024 – Imprisonment is a global public health crisis. The number of people in prison is at an all time high, with 11.5 million people affected globally and prisons across 121 countries operating above capacity. As the number of people in prison continues to increase, countries struggle to provide even the most basic of necessities... Consequently, people in prison have a disproportionate disease burden compared with the general population, with higher rates of communicable and chronic disease worldwide. Despite the growing prison population and the importance of prison health as a global public health issue, medical students receive inadequate education and training on this topic. **Full text:** <https://www.bmj.com/content/384/bmj.q213>

[End-of-Life Care in Prisons](#)

The transformative power of prison hospice programs: A story of redemption

MEDRIVA (U.S.) | Online – 21 February 2024 – Steven Garner's story is a testament to the transformative power of compassion and redemption in the most unlikely of places – a maximum-security prison. Serving a life sentence for second-degree murder at Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola, Garner found purpose by volunteering for the nation's first prison hospice program. For 25 years, he provided care and compassion to dying inmates, developing a sense of humanity within a system that's often devoid of it. Garner's journey began when prison warden Burl Cain established the hospice program... The success of the program has not only changed the culture within Angola prison but has become a model... **Full text:** <https://medriva.com/health/public-health/the-transformative-power-of-prison-hospice-programs-a-story-of-redemption/>

Related:

THE GUARDIAN (U.K.) | Online – 26 February 2024 – “**Louisiana prisons have experienced 50% spike in deaths, report says.**” Farrell Sampier was one of at least 500 incarcerated people ... who died within Louisiana's prison system in the last three years, according to a recent report...¹ And another report ... shows the most prison deaths between 2018 and 2022 occurred at Louisiana's infamous Angola prison.² **Full text:** <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/feb/26/louisiana-prisons-spike-in-deaths-report-angola>

1. 'Louisiana Deaths Behind Bars 2025-2021,' Loyola University New Orleans (College of Law), June 2023. **Download report at:** <https://www.incarcerationtransparency.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Death-Behind-Bars-Report-2023-Final-06.05.23.pdf>
2. 'Louisiana Department of Corrections: Deaths in Custody 2018 to 2022,' Louisiana Department of Public Safety & Corrections (Bureau of Justice Statistics). Undated. **Infographic:** <https://doc.louisiana.gov/death-dashboards/>

NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO (U.S.) | Online – 19 February 2024 – ‘**Death and redemption in an American prison.**’ When the prison warden, Burl Cain, decided to start the nation's first prison hospice program, [Steven] Garner volunteered. In helping dying inmates, Garner believed he could claw back some meaning to the life he had nearly squandered in the heat of the moment. **Full text:** <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2024/02/19/1231119824/prison-hospice-angola-louisiana-quilting>

This hospice volunteer program is transforming end-of-life care for inmates in Maine

WCSH-TV (U.S.) | Online – 16 February 2024 – Philosophers have grappled with the concept [of death] for centuries. Religious leaders have built mass followings around the idea of the afterlife. Different cultures have presented different interpretations of what death means. A commonality shared among many is that most people don't want to die alone. In a lot of ways, hospice care is designed to address this fear ... [tending to] ... terminally-ill patient's needs – emotionally, physically, and spiritually... There are thousands of hospice care programs located throughout the country. One is at the Maine State Prison. **Full text:** <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/crime/this-hospice-volunteer-program-is-transforming-end-of-life-care-for-inmates-in-maine/ar-BB1ilpPG>

N.B. Video clip of the WCSH-TV news report: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBP8344yeVM>

A prison sentence is not a sentence to poor health and social care

NURSING TIMES (U.K.) | Online – 14 February 2024 – In the past 10 years alone, deaths in prison from natural causes have risen by 77%, creating an urgent need for end-of-life care (EoLC). Hospice UK has identified EoLC for people in prison as a key focus area that must be looked at to ensure high-quality care is available to all. In 'Dying Behind Bars,'¹ recommendations were made for improvements to the Prisons & Probation Ombudsman..., plus the wider palliative and EoLC sector... Bringing together a grant programme supported by funding from the Linder Foundation ... we are setting out to improve access to and quality of palliative and EoLC for people in prison. **Full text:** <https://www.nursingtimes.net/opinion/a-prison-sentence-is-not-a-sentence-to-poor-health-and-social-care-14-02-2024/>

1. 'Dying Behind Bars: How can we better support people in prison at the end of life?' Hospice UK, April 2021. Download report at: <https://www.hospiceuk.org/publications-and-resources/dying-behind-bars-how-can-we-better-support-people-prison-end-life>

Compassionate Release

“Fifty years just ain't enough”: Dying in prison, and still denied release

FILTER (The Influence Foundation, U.S.) | Online – 14 December 2024 – Clemency and Pardon Board hearings are televised, and at the end the five Board members cast their votes then and there. But most people don't make it as far as a hearing. The majority – including Snook, myself and more than a dozen others I've known over the years – are denied in preliminary review, and the Board members who deny them never have to give their reason. Snook won't even know if they looked at his medical records. Clemency, the broad term for any form of mercy made by executive order, is discretionary. The Board members aren't beholden to any particular standards or criteria, but vote based on their personal views. **Full text:** <https://filtermag.org/clemency-extraordinary-release-prison-don-snook/>

Advocates support Indiana bill that allows early release of some terminally ill prisoners

WTHR TV News (U.S.) | Online – 1 February 2024 – Senate Bill 291 ... would allow certain prisoners who are terminally ill, have a chronic medical condition, or are severely disabled, to file a petition with the court to modify their sentence without the consent of the prosecuting attorney. There are certain criteria the court must consider before granting or denying a request for modification. Advocates for the so-called "compassionate release" bill say criminals who don't pose a safety threat deserve the right to be with their loved ones in their dying days and, too often, people are dying in prison while waiting to be released on medical clemency. **Full text:** <https://www.wthr.com/article/news/crime/advocates-support-indiana-senate-bill-that-allows-early-release-of-some-terminally-ill-prisoners/531-86496d10-9545-45d1-8caf-7e3c44d465a3>

Care Planning & Serious Illness Conversations

A survey of state correctional health care providers on advance care planning: Opportunity for collaboration with corrections

AMERICAN JOURNAL OF HOSPICE & PALLIATIVE MEDICINE | Online – 27 January 2024 – Most [respondents] reported their prison did not have a dedicated end-of-life care program... Two-thirds indicated their facility provided the opportunity to designate a health care agent with physicians most likely responsible for facilitating completion of a health care directive. The care of persons aging and dying in prison is complex and requires investigation addressing staff and prison population education, ethics guidelines for care, compassionate release and advance care planning. Hospice and palliative care professionals could collaborate with corrections professionals and national organizations to provide innovative education and support... **Abstract (w. references):** <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/10499091241226638>

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Selected Resources

AUSTRALIA | Palliative Care in Prisons Project (University of Technology Sydney):
<https://bit.ly/32GrcOy>

AUSTRALIA | University of Melbourne:
<https://bit.ly/3eqeVh9>

EUROPE | European Association for Palliative Care Task Force: Mapping Palliative Care for People in Prisons: <https://bit.ly/3NRvjg6>

EUROPE (Belgium) | End-of-Life Care Research Group (University of Ghent):
<https://bit.ly/3OuX23v>

EUROPE (Switzerland) | Prison Research Group (University of Bern):
<https://bit.ly/42gerD2>

U.K. | Hospice UK <https://bit.ly/3wkntF0>

U.K. | International Observatory on End-of-Life Care (Lancaster University):
<https://bit.ly/3AlpfWa>

U.K. | Nursing in Prison (Springer Publishing):
<https://bit.ly/3OQ77KV>

N.B. Textbook: 'Palliative & End-of-Life Care in Prison' Chapter pp.187-210.

U.K. | Penal Reform International:
<https://bit.ly/3leePJ4>

U.S. | Hospirus Health Hospice Prison Program: <http://bit.ly/3TXY9w8>

U.S. | Humane Prison Hospice Project:
<http://bit.ly/2VLRkTK>

U.S. | Louisiana-Mississippi Hospice & Palliative Care Organization: <http://bit.ly/3Ko9DWQ>

U.S. | National Prison Hospice Association:
<http://bit.ly/43q4MvO>

U.S. | Prison Fellowship:
<https://bit.ly/3AdWQkQ>

U.S. | Prison Policy Initiative
<https://bit.ly/425vyb0>

U.S. | Prison Terminal <https://bit.ly/2LTYv7M>

U.S. | Release Aging in People in Prison
<https://rappcampaign.com/>

U.S. | University of Minnesota (School of Nursing): <http://bit.ly/41IGbGi>

U.S. | The Visiting Room Project, Louisiana State Penitentiary
<http://bit.ly/3MaNpsv>



To keep abreast of current thinking in hospice and palliative care, check out 'Literature Search,' posted each month on the website of the International Association for Hospice & Palliative Care: <https://bit.ly/3WWxUYC>

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Biosketch: <https://bit.ly/3XMTRs4>