

Publication

Easily forgotten : elderly female prisoners

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Women form a growing minority within the worldwide prison population and have special needs and distinct characteristics. Within this group exists a smaller sub-group: elderly female prisoners (EFPs) who require tailored social and health interventions that address their unique needs. Data collected from two prisons in Switzerland housing women prisoners were studied. Overall 26 medical records were analyzed, 13 from EFPs (50+ years) and for comparison 13 from young female prisoners (YFPs, 49 years and younger). Additionally, five semi-structured interviews were conducted with EFPs. Using the layer model of vulnerability, three layers of vulnerability were identified: the "prisoner" layer; followed by the layer of "woman"; both of which are encompassed by the layer of "old age." The analysis of these layers resulted in three main areas where EFPs are particularly vulnerable: their status of "double-minority," health and health-care access, and their social relations. Prison administration and policy-makers need to be more sensitive to gender and age related issues in order to remedy these vulnerabilities.

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