

Publication

The collision of care and punishment: Ageing prisoners' view on compassionate release

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Most prisoners wish to spend their last days outside prison. Early release of seriously ill and ageing prisoners, commonly termed compassionate release, can be granted based on legal regulations but is rarely successful. The aim of this paper is to present the views of ageing prisoners on compassionate release using qualitative interviews. Participants argued for compassionate release on the grounds of illness and old age, citing respect for human dignity. Their hopes of an early release however often contradicted their actual experiences. Framing these results within Garland's depiction of the criminology of the self and the criminology of the other, it is evident that in reality, the punitive strategy prevails. This strategy explains the rare use of compassionate release and how it negatively impacts prisoners' access to end-of-life care. A possible solution is the welfarist criminology, strongly supported by a human rights approach. Awareness of the dominance of the punitive strategy is crucial for medical personnel as they are best placed to ensure access to end-of-life care for prisoners through compassionate release.

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