

Council of Europe

Ethical and Organisational Aspects of Health Care in Prison (1998)

Part B Recommendation No R (98)7

B. Addiction to drugs, alcohol and medication: management of pharmacy and distribution of medication

43. The care of prisoners with alcohol and drug-related problems needs to be developed further, taking into account in particular the services offered for drug addicts, as recommended by the Co-operation Group to Combat Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in Drugs ("Pompidou Group"). Therefore, it is necessary to offer sufficient training to medical and prison personnel, and to improve co-operation with external counselling services, in order to ensure continuing follow-up therapy on discharge to the community.

44. The prison doctor should encourage prisoners to take advantage of the system of social or psychotherapeutic assistance in order to prevent the risks of abuse of drugs, medication and alcohol.

45. The treatment of the withdrawal symptoms of abuse of drugs, alcohol or medication in prison should be conducted along the same lines as in the community.

46. If prisoners undergo a withdrawal cure, the doctor should encourage them, both while still in prison and after their release, to take all the necessary steps to avoid a relapse into addiction.

47. Detained persons should be able to consult a specialised internal or external counsellor who would give them the necessary support both while they are serving their sentence and during their care after release. Such counsellors should also be able to contribute to the in-service training of custodial staff.

48. Where appropriate, prisoners should be allowed to carry their prescribed medication. However, medication which is dangerous if taken as an overdose should be withheld and issued to them on an individual dose-by-dose basis.

49. In consultation with the competent pharmaceutical adviser, the prison doctor should prepare as necessary a comprehensive list of medicines and drugs usually prescribed in the medical service. A medical prescription should remain the exclusive responsibility of the medical profession, and medicines should be distributed by authorised personnel only.