



Prisoner Narratives

Begging for Stability

“It’s in my best interest as well as the best interest of the prison, my family, and the community, that I stay on my meds.”

Rodney W. is an African American male housed at Jefferson City Correctional Center (JCCC), Jefferson City, Missouri, a facility that is frequently on Missouri CURE’s radar for abuse and inhumane treatment, including obstruction of justice, racism and excessive use of force. A common complaint prisoners continue to report concerns inadequate medical care, specifically mental health, and the highly questionable and counterproductive policy of confining those afflicted in adseg (administrative segregation), without proper support, supervision, or treatment. This policy and standard practice not only exacerbate mental health issues but also, as we have often learned, create unnecessary conflicts within the facility. In some of the worst-case scenarios, it results in violence on staff and other prisoners. Tragically for some, the only way out appears to be suicide.

Rodney W. is one of the mentally ill prisoners housed in Jefferson City Correctional Center's Adseg Housing Unit, an inhumane environment without a single rehabilitative virtue. Rodney W's only request is to be able to continue to take his psychotropic medication safely. Ultimately Rodney only wants what is best for his mental state and the facility, yet he is being prevented and discouraged by officials from doing so. He reached out to Missouri CURE in October of 2017 with the following letter, pleading for assistance:

*“Dear Missouri Cure,
I am writing you today seeking your assistance with an issue that concerns **my mental health and stability**. I was recently transferred from Potosi Correctional Center. While at Potosi I was prescribed Depacote, a mood stabilizer, by Dr. Stevens, the psychiatrist. This medication has an acid in it that eats at the stomach lining as a known side effect. It is also known to cause stomach pain, nausea and upset stomach. To combat this I was ordered an extra calorie diet bag through the mental health department.*

***Since arriving at JCCC, I have not received my diet bag.** This is akin to cruel and unusual punishment due to the pain and discomfort I am feeling. I have repeatedly addressed this issue to both medical and mental health staff who are showing deliberate indifference and bias to my needs.*

*Dr. Stevens ordered my diet bag for six months. My lay-in does not expire until October. **There is no legitimate reason why the officials here at Jefferson City Correctional Center cannot order my diet bag.** There are many other prisoners who are prescribed Depacote that currently receive a diet bag and at other MDOC prisons as well. Currently I am extremely distressed and feeling anxiety because I may be forced to stop taking my medication if I am not given my extra calorie bag.*

***I am in adseg. My focus is to go home and make it out of adseg and into the general population. These meds help to stabilize my mood so that I do not lash out and engage in assertive overly aggressive behavior. It's in my best interest as well as the best interest of the prison, my family, and the community, that I stay on my meds.** However I cannot continue taking them if they are upsetting my stomach. To alleviate this, I only ask that staff give me the extra calorie bag Dr. Stevens ordered that I was receiving when I transferred out of Potosi, which I still have an active lay-in for. Thank you.*

*Sincerely,
Rodney”*

For the mentally ill forced to live in solitary confinement without the proper professional care or supervision, maintaining the regimen of one's medication undoubtedly has a direct and positive impact on the relationship between staff and prisoners in reducing violence and conflict. What is most concerning, though, is that even medical staff, who hold the responsibility for the well-being of the prisoners, seem completely and woefully ignorant. The fact that there is such a simple and obvious solution to prevent physical harm from debilitating side effects of a psychotropic medication in the form of a few extra calories, yet they fail to care enough to do anything about it, boggles the mind. The conclusion: MDOC and Corizon Health staff are either devoid of human virtues or incompetent.