



Urgent Need to Improve Mental Health Care in Correctional Institutions

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Introduction

The environment in correctional institutions has been a concern for several years. With America having the highest incarceration rates in the world, there needs to be a change in managing correctional institutions in the most efficient ways. Psychology and criminal justice are tightly linked together due to the positive correlation between mental illnesses and criminal acts. Mentally ill inmates make up about half of the population of jails and prisons in America. It has become a large issue that inmates do not receive appropriate care for physical and mental conditions. Many inmates are suffering from those conditions on a daily basis, and the lack of access to professional medical care is a violation of their personal rights. Psychological help is essential because it provides an opportunity to improve emotional state while incarcerated and an easier transition after release.

Thesis

Correctional institutions need to enforce more mental health programs and implement alternative approaches in order to improve mental health care. It would help inmates better themselves as well as reduce overall spending on corrections by reducing the proportion of the mentally ill.

Issues

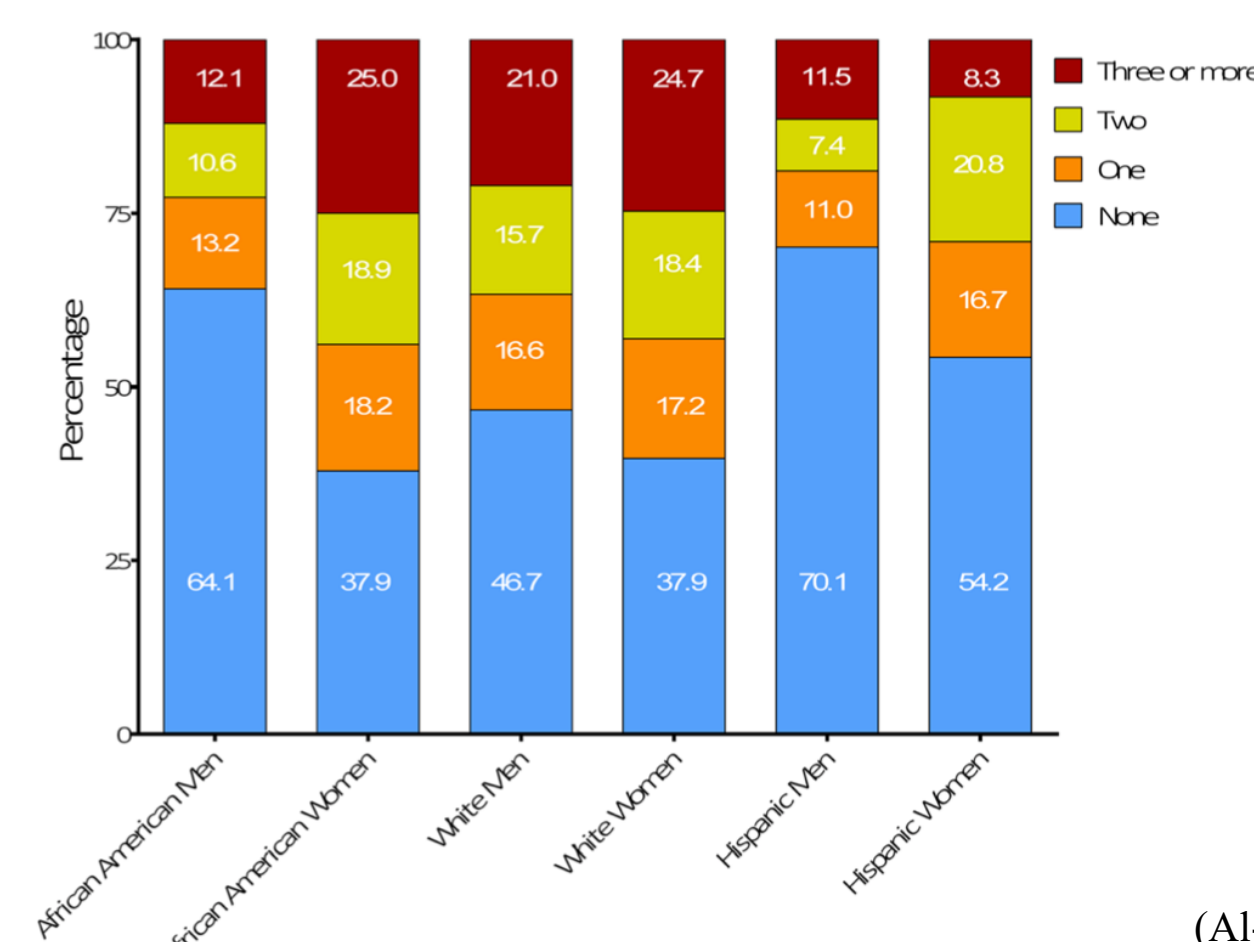


Fig. 1 All prevalence rates are cross-sectional. There were 2090 African American men, 64.1% of which has no mental illness. Women in general exhibited the highest burden of mental illness compared to other racial groups. Quarter of the female African American inmates had three or more mental illness diagnoses. These prevalence rates were similar to white women (n = 354) of which 24.7% had three or more mental illnesses. More than half of the white men (n = 5008) had a mental illness diagnosis which is the highest number compared to rates in other racial groups. Percentage of inmates diagnosed with mental illness in Iowa by race and gender

- Lack of proper mental health care correlates to misconduct
- Co-occurring health conditions and solitary confinement correlate to poorer mental health
- 1/3 to 1/2 of 2.3 million individuals in US corrections are struggling with mental illnesses
- It is expensive to treat inmates with mental illnesses in prisons and jails

Solutions

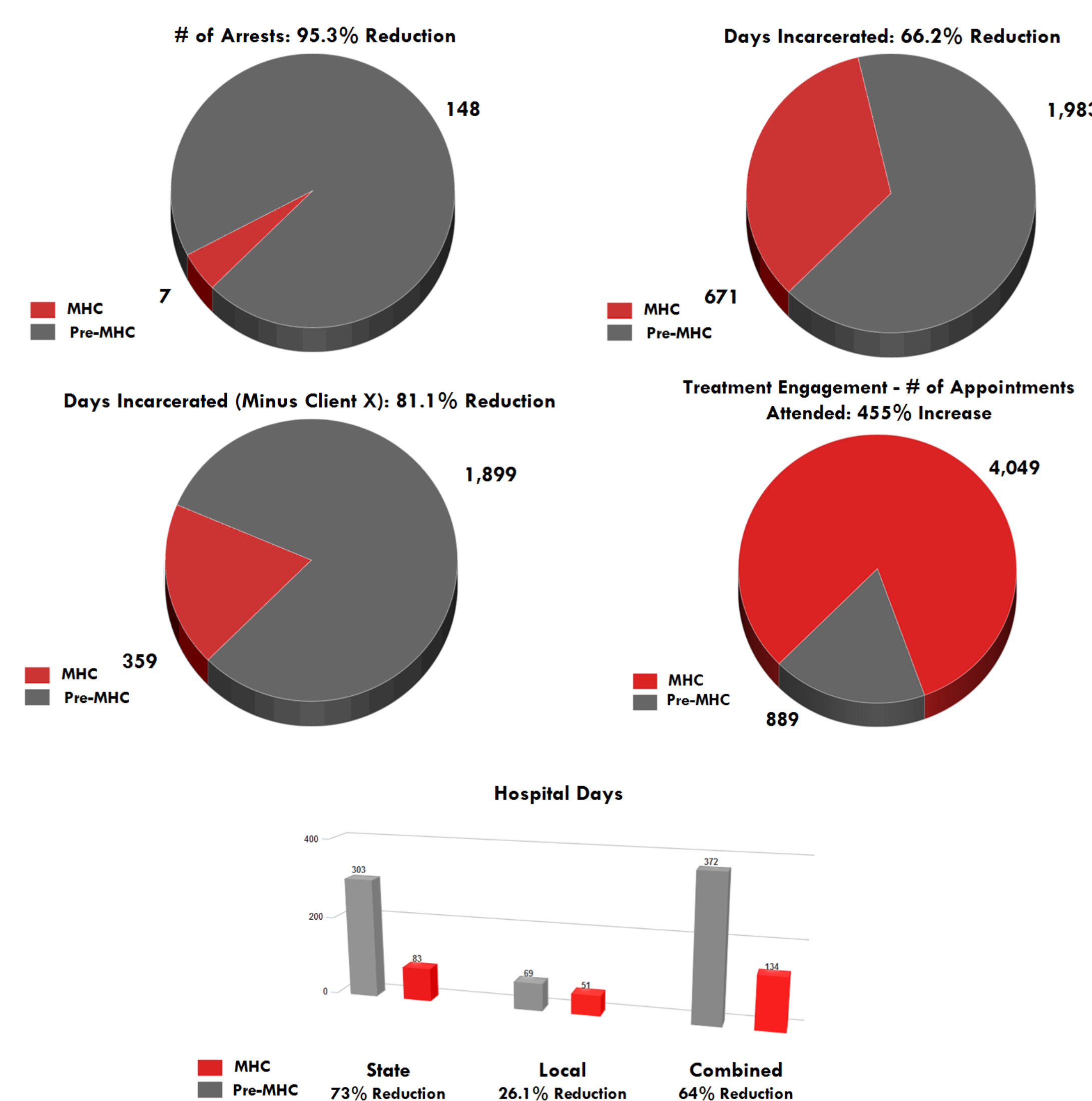
- Timely and professional diagnosis
- Improving the training of support staff
- Reducing the proportion of mentally ill
- Enforcing the use of a crisis stabilization unit
- Increasing use of mental health courts

Quotes

“Mentally ill individuals are at higher than normal risk of being victimized, and these environments can contribute greatly to psychiatric deterioration. Solitary confinement is particularly harmful” (Mulvey and Schubert 237).

“Of the jail inmates with a mental health problem, only 17.5% received mental health treatment at the jail, and only 14.8% took prescribed medication” (Gottfried and Christopher 337).

“Despite the high prevalence of mental illness among inmates and the service-provider roles placed on correctional officers, adequate mental health training is absent from most institutions,” (Kolodziejczak and Sinclair 256).



(“Mental Health Court”)

Conclusion

Finding alternative approaches like making timely and professional diagnoses, improving training support staff, and reducing the proportion of mentally ill inmates can improve mental health care in jails and prisons. Programs that avert offenders from incarceration and redirect them to mental health treatment can be very effective and beneficial. Researchers and workers need to address the issue and raise awareness about the issue of poor mental health in correctional institutions.

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