

Dan Perkins - 10/12/2023

Thank you for your interest in hearing our grievances about Stateville's healthcare. To discuss our healthcare in its entirety would require a lengthy discussion that's beyond the particular "ask" of this piece. I've chosen to advise you about one particular issue I've been dealing with for years, yes, years. Before, I'll discuss my fight for treatment of two torn rotator cuff tendons, the cart before the house process, and the indifference displayed by our medical staff.

For context, I had a full right shoulder reconstruction approximately ten years ago. The repair was too full two full thickness tears in the rotator cuff and a torn biceps tendon. This all happened just before my arrest on this case. I thank God for that timing otherwise I'd be in here with no meaningful use of either of my arms. Yes, at ten years of confinement (on this incarceration) I am the least tenured member of our Humans of Life Row (HOLR) think tank. However, one thing we share is our fear of aging in prison. Correctional healthcare is abysmal, slow, and a system of arbitrary triage. At 47 years old, I am starting to feel the effects of father time and those effects are only exacerbated and expedited by protracted incarceration and the attending neglect of adequate medical attention.

May of 2022 I was sent to the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) medical center. Orthopedics (ortho) ordered a MRI of my left shoulder. It only took about four years of extreme pain in the shoulder and bicep, loss of range of motion, and difficulty with the most basic of daily functions. Considering the aforementioned experience with my right shoulder I knew what was going on. I was not surprised when the results showed two full thickness tears in the rotator cuff. I'm certain the bicep is shot as well but the MRI doesn't examine that for down the arm. Nevertheless, I've applied significant pressure since the results asking for it to be repaired.

I've signed up for "sick call" no less than 20-30 times since then to check on the status of my return to UIC ortho to discuss my options. Stateville's response is always the same deflection of responsibility: "we're waiting for ortho to schedule an appointment for you"; "ortho is very backed up". A couple months is getting ridiculous. We're approaching a couple years. In what world is that acceptable? The nurse practitioner (NP) Orr gives me the speech about aging adults and the percentage of said population that would have rotator cuff tears if given an MRI. So that makes it ok? I know rotators cuff injuries vary in degree of severity and numerous factors should be taken into account prior to the decision to operate. I've had those admonishments. My left

shoulder is far worse than the right was prior to electing on that surgery and that doesn't even factor in the circumstances of incarceration.

I'm not buying the excuse that ortho is backed up. The inmate population shares information, especially about healthcare because we all suffer the same fate. Inmates are regularly being sent to ortho and surgeries are still performed. I.D.O.C. spends their money on officer salary. Officers squeeze and milk the budget for overtime while suffer the arbitrary triage system that determines who gets treatment and who can "deal with it". NP Orr's treatment plan is to not use the arm, bahahaha. Modern day prison is one of the most oppressive systems man can experience. It can be unbearable and we all have different means of coping. For me, relief comes via recreational and job opportunities. I have to get my heart rate up, sweat, distract my mind and in doing so I'd rather my arm fall off then sit in a cell and rot away. Even if you take advantage of ALL movement opportunities we live a sedentary, toxic life. To further exacerbate problems they put the cart before the horse.

If you report injury the order x-ray, physical therapy, then MRI. I understand the x-ray in case there's a break but since the x-ray tells you nothing about muscular damage you can't go straight to physical therapy. From my understanding this is contrary to the medical "order of operations". I use this terminology because like our mathematical order of operations, if you don't follow rules the result is undesirable. You can't work on an injured area without knowing what's wrong. You could be tearing things up worse than they are. If physical therapy is unsuccessful, if you're lucky, you'll be sent to UIC ortho for an MRI. But why?

My MRI results came back 18 months ago and showed major structural damage. If you weren't going to do anything then why waste money on the MRI? If a surgery were able to come to fruition they'd need a subsequent MRI anyway. A doctor won't operate off the findings of a years old MRI. So all I'm left with at this point, while I wait it out, is the inmate grievance process.

My grievance entails everything I've been through. I've been on an overdose of Ibuprofen 800, Tylenol, and topical creams. I take the IBU because they provide relief of alternative aches and pains attached to this nearly 50 year old body. Tylenol helps with my regular occurring headaches and I don't touch the topicals because they do nothing. I also take Tramadol and Gabapentin (sp.). I particularly try to concentrate my meds in the evening in order to get some sleep.

My understanding is that a good night's sleep is one of the best things we can get to add to the quality of life. It's hard enough to wake up every day and face this shit. It's far worse when you've tossed and turned all night. I think it's important to add a side note here to highlight why my surgery should be considered. My right hip (entire leg really) was very problematic. I went through the entire process and just recently received MRI results—about three months ago. Right labral tear, impingement in both sockets and a right glut strain. I'm not sure why they did the MRI because this is where their efforts stop. Nevertheless, my point is I find it hard to sleep in any position. If I roll on my left shoulder, I'm soon to wake up; roll on my right side for too long then my hip/leg will wake me and I'm a horrible back and stomach sleeper. So every night is a battle for sleep and rest that seems elusive. To put it bluntly, our grievance process takes an inordinate amount of time takes an inordinate amount of time to reach exhaustion. At that point you can seek civil action and good luck trying to prove neglect on deliberate indifference. There's also one other layer to this I've failed to mention.

Prison is still an inherently dangerous environment where confrontation and assaults are only a moment away. Conflict and toxic masculinity loom large. I'm not the type of individual to start shit. In fact, I go to great lengths to display humility and avoid confrontation, particularly now considering my advanced vulnerability, but situations can arise spontaneously and may inevitably lead to violence. There is no chance I could effectively defend myself against a meaningful attack. I have lost meaningful use of my left arm. The most mundane of daily activities are troublesome (i.e. lifting a cup of coffee to my face, getting dressed, etc.) So movements requiring real strength and speed are out of the question. For example, when humidity levels are high our walls and floors, especially when wearing our rubber shower shoes. One wrong step and you'll bust your ass. I did this not too long ago and flailed my arms to catch balance and the pain was excruciating and took three weeks to get my shoulder back to where it was. My arm in this shape is not only just wrong and neglect but it is also dangerous.

I've vented some of my recent concerns with correctional healthcare. Many of us made it here with minimal due process through our criminal proceedings. I once heard we're sent to prison as punishment, not to be punished. I've been sitting in a cell with serious structural damage to multiple parts of my body. My physical capabilities are diminished, my weight is up, mental health is down, anxiety is up, my age is up, but lifespan down. Somebody help! Nah, for real though. I try to make the best of my days. I know I have a duty to life and that is to suffer

courageously because there is meaning and purpose in that. Stateville is taking that suffering too far. I thank you for taking this time to hear my grievances.