Introduction to the Special Series on Addiction Treatment within Correctional Facilities

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In 1971, President Richard Nixon announced "America's public enemy number one in the United States is drug abuse." For more than 40 years the war on drugs has helped place growing numbers of people experiencing substance use disorders into correctional facilities. By 2013, nearly half a million people in the US are in prison or jail for a drug offense. Recent estimates by the Department of Justice indicate that the majority of state (69%) and federal (64%) prisoners were regular drug users before incarceration and nearly one-third were on drugs at the time of their offense. Recent efforts at the local, State, and Federal level have shifted away from criminalizing addiction and moving towards treatment of those in correctional facilities and diverting those on the streets towards treatment instead of into correctional facilities.

This month The BASIS introduces our Special Series on Addiction Treatment Within Correctional Facilities. First up, October's STASH explores racial and ethnic disparities in using substance use disorder treatment resources while in prison. Next in The WAGER we examine changes made to the diagnostic criteria of gambling disorder from the DSM-IV to the DSM-5, and how those changes alter the rate of diagnosis among incarcerated offenders. Later this month, The DRAM reviews a recent study that used validated screening tools to measure substance use, desire for help, and access to treatment among recently incarcerated prisoners. We will wrap up our Special Series with an ASHES that explores the impact a tobacco-free prison policy has on mortality among inmates.

In addition to our regular posts, throughout the month we'll be sharing editorials from a correctional facility administrator, a law enforcement official, and a community advocate, all of whom offer front-line perspectives on law enforcement approaches to substance abuse. We hope you will learn from and enjoy our Special Series on Addiction Treatment within Correctional Facilities.

— John Kleschinsky