

MORE THAN JUST PRISON MEDICAL CARE

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On August 24, 2021, I am at the ID and Property Room area of the prison when an offender experiences a medical emergency. I thought it might be a serious epileptic episode so I instruct an officer to contact medical staff, and move to assist another offender to gently place the distressed offender on his right side on the floor. Then, a youngish, white, prison nurse arrives. I want to share an observation.

There is no doubt that nursing education, training, and experience is crucial to ensure that an offender receives good medical care. The nurse has that. She assesses his physical condition, asks questions about the event and his medical background, and double-checks answers. She bends down to comfort the offender and assures us all until the seizures end. But, there is more.

As the offender becomes conscious, it is apparent to me that he feels panic. He realizes that his seizure occurred around strangers. It is obvious that too many were trying to help by reaching and grabbing and offering advice, which only created chaos and confusion. But, the nurse manages both results very well. She explains to the zealous what is necessary, and to the epileptic offender what is required. Moreover, she deeply considers the psychological effect of the episode on the distressed offender. What becomes clear is that she understands his fear and his anxiety about what occurred, and what should happen next.

Though it seems reasonable to rest, he refuses to go back to his housing unit. Without a word I got that the nurse got that the epileptic seizure might be seen as weakness to an (other) affiliated gang member. He was helpless in such a distressed

state. He needed the assistance of strangers to care for him while vulnerable. His returning to the housing unit might make matters worse. The physical effects of the epileptic seizure are gone, however, the psychological effects linger, while exigent circumstances cause concern. All together, probably there is a number of things for that nurse to consider before she answer's What's the right thing to do? Probably things that educators don't teach at nursing school. Probably things that parents in any mostly white, middle class, suburban landscape don't know.

That nurse at that time and under those circumstances showed good values and intuition that apply beyond any nursing job description, and those in that nurse's care at a prison benefit.

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