

PRISON HEALTH IN IMAGES

On a case of self-injury in a psychotic patient

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Self-harm behaviors are deliberate aggressions performed by an individual. In penitentiary settings this is far from extraordinary and due to its unpredictable nature, severity or frequency it entails a real challenge for prison healthcare services. We hereby present the case of a patient who presented a first-episode of this

behavior, repeatedly performing such activities up to three times in a one-week period. This was the first expression of a delirious messianic pattern which was finally diagnosed of a schizophrenic psychosis.

The 24 year old patient had no previous psychiatric record and was initially attended on the basis of an



Figure 1.



Figure 3.



Figure 2.



Figure 4.

injury which consisted of a deep abdominal incised injury. Please note that within the staging the patient wore light clothing and was covered in his own blood, therefore dramatizing what eventually was to be considered a messianic delirium. The patient's behavior was utterly negativist at all times and he refused any contact and dialogue with the healthcare team, even showing some resistance to be attended.

Some days later he tried to sew his own lips as a means of refusing communication and finally, one day later he saw his own eyes. From these expressions we could find out that these self-injuries were performed on the basis of a complicated maze of delirious thoughts within which he considered himself the world's savior and therefore needed to perform a self-immolation sacrifice.

Deliberate self-injury needs to be set apart from suicidal behaviors¹. This has been described among patients who suffer from anxious disorders as part of depressive or frustrating experiences. Sub-cultural self-injury, often observed within penitentiary settings mainly pursues the manipulation of the environment. However, self-injury has also been described as part of psychotic symptoms²⁻⁷, so that psychosis needs to be ruled out in self-injurers, especially if the self-inflicted injuries are highly harmful with no lethal intention, if they have less frequent locations, if they entail a cultural or religious symbolic content or if they lack any instrumentalization content. As for the case presented, the fact that the patient tried to sew his own eyes was, according to him "to stop seeing so many sins", entailed a type of self-injury which fulfills the four aforementioned features.

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