

The following article was submitted to *The Ally* and was accepted for publication. Prior to printing the newspaper, the CSH administration pulled the article and refused to allow it to be published. This blatant act of censorship simply typifies exactly the kinds of things I am complaining about.

OOPS!!

Okay, so I was wrong. I'll admit it; can't deny it. I told everyone that this Hosprison Administration had already made the stupidest, most hare-brained decisions it could make. I said it would not be remotely possible to take a more moronic course of action, or make up policies that were more pin-headed than those already in effect. *Boy was I wrong!* Just when you think they *can't* do anything dumber, they surprise the hell out of you and *do*.

What am I talking about, you ask? Let me tell you a story to illustrate: As you know, we are in the middle of an influenza epidemic. No news there. But let's go back to early November, when this outbreak first began to rear its sickly head here at CSH. Imagine, if you will, Unit 12 at Coalinga State Hosprison. Fifty men, interacting all day long with each other on the unit, mingling in the dayroom, sharing space in the common areas—dayroom, restroom, shower—eating together and sleeping four to a room, and in contact with hundreds of other inmates from other units.

Now imagine a couple of those men taking ill: fever, chills, ague, and all the other flu-like symptoms. "What shall we do?" cries the administration. "Let's ask the Medical Department; they'll know!" "Quick: isolate them so they don't get others sick too!" answers the CMO. So that is what they decide to do. So, now we have these two sick men on the unit (although in reality there are at least five others with varying degrees of symptoms—some more severe than the two cases the medical department now knows about) who need to be quarantined.

Does the administration tell the U.S. to move the sick men on the unit to the Medical Unit? Nope, they might make the sick people sicker. Do they tell her to move them to one of the empty, unused units so they would have no contact with other inmates? No. Instead, they tell her—and this is where it gets good—to move two men out of their single cells on the unit and swap beds with the sick men in their four-man cells. That's right; take healthy guys and move them into the spaces where the sick guys have been living, sneezing, coughing and blowing their noses for days! Then take the *sick* guys and put them in the single cells and leave them there for a week. Okay, now at least they are isolated. But wait! It gets better! They seem to have forgotten that the sick men are not bedridden or confined to their (new) cells. They are still sharing the dayroom (where they now have to eat their cold, sack-lunch meals, since they *are* confined to the unit) still using the same toilets, sinks, showers, and air space as the other, uninfected inmates. The only time the sick men were "isolated" was when they were in bed. The rest of the time they were in constant contact with the unit population.

So, what was accomplished by this ill-considered, panic induced, knee-jerk, bed-swap decision? I'll tell you. Let's look at the results one at a time: (1) Healthy men were forced to move into an infectious environment; (2) Clean, ostensibly uninfected rooms were exposed to a highly communicable virus; (3) Sick men remained on the unit to mingle with and infect the other inmates; (4) The sick men were deprived of hot food, fresh air, and exercise for the duration of their "isolation"; (5) It was demonstrated conclusively that this Hosprison has no viable emergency plan to deal with an epidemic; (6) The CMO showed us that he is apparently under the ludicrous impression that diseases can only be passed to others when the infected person is in bed. (Where the *HELL* did *he* get a license?!)

There is no doubt that this was an absurd, senseless decision on the part of the Hosprison Administration, so I'm going to go out on a limb here. I *now* say that *this* is the stupidest, most hare-brained decision that could ever be made here. But, hey, I've been wrong before. Maybe they'll surprise me again. Stay tuned.

Paul Vekar