MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF CORRECTIONAL HEALTH CARE

Edited by
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Preface

This book is about correctional health care. It is about the practical issues that both providers and health administrators face and is intended to provide clinical and administrative guidance to those working in correctional facilities.

This book is not a technical treatise, and some of the opinions and guidelines expressed by the authors will undoubtedly change as more information becomes available and technology changes. We hope that this book will shed some light and provide a useful perspective to assist providers in making efficient and effective decisions.

The text touches on many topics and current trends in correctional health care. Part 1 provides a historical, moral, ethical, and legal perspective. Determining whether an action is ethical or unethical is not always as easy as determining whether it is legal or illegal. Determining that a constitutional violation has occurred is equally perplexing; the courts have not established a single standard that determines constitutional adequacy. Neither professional standards nor prevailing conditions at other comparable institutions have been adopted as definitive standards of care.

Part 2 covers physician guidelines that have been written by physician experts for correctional health care institutions. As managed care companies emphasize cost containment in the free world, we must also be aware of strategies designed to promote clinical effectiveness and cost containment in correctional health care. Contagious diseases have always been a significant problem for correctional facilities. Part 2 focuses on TB, STD, HIV, and hepatitis management. Preventing transmission of communicable diseases in correctional settings requires constant vigilance, as inmates are more likely than the general population to harbor serious illnesses and undetected health problems. Close and crowded living conditions, poor hygiene practices, and prior high-risk behaviors make inmates particularly vulnerable to communicable diseases. Correctional facilities have a unique opportunity to provide appropriate educational materials that may have an impact on the prevention and treatment of communicable diseases. Recently, there have been promising advances in the treatment of hepatitis C. Because the cost of the treatment is high, many departments of correction are weighing the benefits of early intervention with costly medications against reduced morbidity and mortality.

Investigators who have studied dental disease in correctional facilities have discovered high rates of dental disease as measured by the index of decay and missing and filled surfaces. The inmate population, including juveniles, typically has more decayed surfaces and fewer filled surfaces, indicating reduced access or use of dental care in the community prior to incarceration. An adequate dental program restores normal function, prevents deterioration, and maintains normal health. This is done by assessing restorative, preventive, and oral hygiene needs on admission and providing dental services to treat those needs. Timely care for acute dental needs and emergencies such as toothache, avulsed teeth, abscess, and facial fractures is also needed.

With longer sentences imposed and fewer inmates being granted parole, more of our inmates are growing old while incarcerated. With their frailties and histories of abuse and neglect, older prisoners are contributing to the increased cost of providing correctional health care. They present unique needs. Special housing units and specialized programs are among the strategies used to provide them with humane living conditions.
Telemedicine is one of the fastest growing technologies of the future. It can provide medical expertise to remote rural areas of the county, thus reducing the need for on-site specialists, improving access to care, decreasing transportation costs, and reducing or eliminating the risk of escape. Facilities that have tried telemedicine have generally found it to be very helpful and continue to discover new applications. With the high-resolution cameras now available, some very sophisticated diagnostic work can be accomplished through telemedicine.

Not only the elderly, but an increasing number of juveniles are found in correctional institutions and detention facilities. Youth in correctional facilities, especially females, represent a vastly underserved population with many health care needs. Teenage pregnancies are high risk, especially when compounded with drug use and stress. Many of the juveniles have mental health disorders, others have conduct disorders that are less responsive to treatment. Inadequate links between community mental health centers and juvenile detention facilities result in the incarceration of many youth who would be better served in a substance abuse rehabilitation center or mental health treatment center, were funding available.

Jails and prisons have also become the de facto housing for the mentally ill, especially in the case of the homeless population, as de-institutionalization of the mentally ill has run its course over the past few decades. In Part 3, current trends in correctional mental health are discussed along with national professional standards relevant to the treatment of mentally ill offenders. The use and cost of psychotropic medicine is increasingly a topic of concern for correctional institutions. As more inmates enter correctional institutions with mental health disorders, the cost of psychotropic medications has had severe budgetary impacts on correctional facilities. Jail diversion programs, a recent trend to divert inmates with misdemeanor charges from coming into the criminal justice system, have received wide support from the courts. Innovative mental health court programs have been found in Seattle, Ft. Lauderdale, and Vancouver, Washington.

Those of us who practice in correctional health care cannot help but be concerned about the numbers of our population who are incarcerated time and time again and the negative connotations that incarceration has in our society. Without rehabilitation, incarceration—like welfare—can foster dependency. Incarceration is a way of life for some people, with parents, relatives, and even whole families journeying through the criminal justice system. Correctional health services can provide opportunities for reducing violence and victimization and preventing future violence.

Part 4 discusses administrative issues relative to correctional facilities. If nursing recruitment and retention are not the primary issues in many correctional facilities in the United States, they are at least two of the major issues. Health care administrators are challenged as never before to find innovative ways of attracting and recruiting nurses. Spending for the health care of inmates has increased rapidly during the last several years. The need for effective management of health care services will become more pronounced especially as prison populations keep growing, aging, and new technologies and treatments emerge. Part 4 examines several strategies that managers in correctional institutions have adopted to control costs.

One method some state and county systems use to manage costs is to contract for comprehensive health care. While there have been pros and cons written about privatization of inmate health care, it is generally thought that the government is inherently inefficient and the private market more effective. Opponents of privatization assert that
profit-making incentives will lead to a sacrifice of the quality and perhaps the quantity of health care. Part 4 presents an outcome study designed to evaluate the effects of private health care before and after inmate health care was contracted to university hospitals in the State of Texas.

Jails and prisons are places of punishment, and health providers are healers. Providers choosing to work in correctional facilities have divergent philosophies from their correctional counterparts and even their patients. Men and women in confinement frequently bring their survival trade with them and adapt it to the prison environment. While much has been written about manipulation, health care providers in the criminal justice system are frequently the intended victims of their patients. This part also presents strategies by which health professionals can become more aware and, in the end, safer in the correctional environment.

Monitoring the quality of health care is more than just a concept; it is a legal and moral obligation. This obligation is fulfilled by quality assurance activities, accreditation, and peer review processes that monitor both facilities and providers. Correctional professionals must remain vigilant to prevent unnecessary delays or denials of medical care, and a quality assurance program is one method to monitor performance and improve patient outcomes.

Acknowledgments

This text could never be accomplished by a single person. Many authors have given generously of their time and skills to prepare the chapters in this book. Many chapters represent the life work and beliefs of the individual authors, about which they hold deep convictions. The chapters all have in common the theme of improving the health care of the incarcerated population. This text is only a beginning in the quest to address many of the complex issues that shape our practice in correctional health care.

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Table of Contents

About the Authors ........................................................................................................... v
Preface .............................................................................................................................. xi

Part 1: Legal Issues

Chapter 1: Ethical Dilemmas in Correctional Health Care Settings
Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 1-1
General Ethical Principles ......................................................................................... 1-2
   Respecting Patient Autonomy ................................................................................ 1-3
   Beneficence ............................................................................................................ 1-3
   Nonmaleficence ...................................................................................................... 1-4
   Justice ..................................................................................................................... 1-5
Dilemmas With Special Implications in Correctional Health Settings ...................... 1-6
   Prisoners as Patients .............................................................................................. 1-6
   Prisoners as Vulnerable Persons ......................................................................... 1-7
      Educational Attainment and Literacy ................................................................. 1-7
      Social Support and Surrogates ......................................................................... 1-7
      Coercive Environment ....................................................................................... 1-8
   Poor Health Status and Limited Health Care ....................................................... 1-8
   High Cost of Health Care ...................................................................................... 1-9
   Pressures on Providers ......................................................................................... 1-9
Confidentiality ............................................................................................................... 1-10
   Confidentiality of Prisoners’ Health Records ..................................................... 1-10
   Laws and Professional Ethics .............................................................................. 1-11
Standard of Care .......................................................................................................... 1-12
   Standard of Care in Correctional Settings ........................................................... 1-13
   Standard of Care and Deliberate Indifference .................................................... 1-13
Conclusion ..................................................................................................................... 1-14

Chapter 2: Synopsis of the Federal Law on Inmate Medical Care
Background—The Deliberate Indifference Standard .............................................. 2-1
   Estelle v. Gamble .................................................................................................... 2-1
   Objective Standard—Serious Medical Needs ....................................................... 2-2
      Mental Health Needs ............................................................................................ 2-3
      Risks to Health .................................................................................................... 2-3
   The Subjective Component of Deliberate Indifference ......................................... 2-3
Chapter 3: Correctional Health Care: The Legal Perspective

Introduction .................................................. 3-2
Legal Framework ............................................ 3-2
Medical Negligence ........................................ 3-3
  Duty ......................................................... 3-3
  Breach of Duty; Standard of Care ....................... 3-3
  Causation ............................................... 3-3
  Damages .................................................. 3-4
State Statutory Law ......................................... 3-4
Federal Constitutional Law ................................. 3-4
Federal Case Law ............................................ 3-4
  Serious Medical Need .................................... 3-5
  Defendant Must Have Knowledge ......................... 3-5
  Deliberate Indifference ................................ 3-5
  Causation ............................................... 3-5
  Damages .................................................. 3-5
Federal Statutory Law ....................................... 3-6
Medical Negligence vs. Deliberate Indifference ........ 3-6
Immunities .................................................. 3-7
Defenses ..................................................... 3-7
Selected Risk Management Issues ....................... 3-8
  Avoiding Risk ........................................... 3-8
  Issues That Raise Risk .................................. 3-8
    The Sally Port and Intake Process ..................... 3-8
    Confidentiality ....................................... 3-8
    Informed Consent .................................... 3-9
    Documentation ........................................ 3-9
Continuity of Care on Discharge ......................... 3-11
Managing Risk .............................................. 3-11
  Subpoenas and Requests for Medical Records .......... 3-11
  Incidents/Adverse Events ................................ 3-11
  Incident Reports ........................................ 3-12
  Quality Assurance Reports ............................... 3-12
  Pre-Suit Notice ........................................ 3-13
  Habeas Corpus Hearings ................................ 3-13
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Communication With Counsel .................................. 3-13
Anatomy of a Lawsuit .............................................. 3-13
Service of Summons and Complaint .......................... 3-13
Cooperation With Your Attorney ............................... 3-14
Answer to Complaint ............................................. 3-14
Discovery .............................................................. 3-14
Alternate Dispute Resolution ................................. 3-15
Trial ................................................................. 3-15
Appeal ............................................................... 3-16

Part 2: Medical Issues

Chapter 4: Physician Clinical Practice Guidelines
Introduction ......................................................... 4-1
Clinical Guidelines ................................................ 4-2
  Guideline Development ........................................ 4-3
  Treatment Goals ............................................... 4-3
  Ethical Issues ................................................. 4-3
  Short-Term Facility .......................................... 4-4
  Long-Term Facility ............................................ 4-4
Outcome and Clinical Guidelines .......................... 4-5
Guideline Implementation .................................... 4-6
Impact of Guidelines ............................................ 4-7
  Financial Impact .............................................. 4-7
Case Law .......................................................... 4-8

Chapter 5: HIV, STD, and TB Intervention and Prevention in Correctional Health Care
A Unique Opportunity for Disease Prevention ............ 5-2
  Priorities and Challenges .................................... 5-2
  Rapid Growth of Inmate Population ....................... 5-3
Increasing Complexity of Diseases ....................... 5-4
  HIV Infection .................................................. 5-4
  Tuberculosis ................................................... 5-5
  Hepatitis C Virus ............................................. 5-5
  Tobacco Use .................................................... 5-5
  Mental Illness .................................................. 5-5
What Correctional Health Care Providers Can Do .... 5-6
  Your Facility’s Legal Responsibilities .................... 5-6
  Whether and When to Test for Disease ................... 5-7
  Confidentiality ................................................ 5-8
Educating Inmates .............................................. 5-8
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genotype</td>
<td>6-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liver Biopsy</td>
<td>6-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>6-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage</td>
<td>6-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Treatment Guidelines</strong></td>
<td>6-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Institutes of Health</td>
<td>6-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Bureau of Prisons</td>
<td>6-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Problem With Community Standards</td>
<td>6-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decompensated Liver Disease</td>
<td>6-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Departments of Correction</td>
<td>6-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screening</td>
<td>6-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>6-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic Care Management</td>
<td>6-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient Management</td>
<td>6-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaccinations Against Other Forms of Hepatitis</td>
<td>6-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hepatitis A</td>
<td>6-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hepatitis B</td>
<td>6-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Treatment Options</strong></td>
<td>6-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonpharmacologic Therapies—Spontaneous Remission,</td>
<td>6-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition, and Herbal Remedies</td>
<td>6-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacologic Therapy</td>
<td>6-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interferon</td>
<td>6-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ribavirin</td>
<td>6-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of Response</td>
<td>6-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Results of Therapy</strong></td>
<td>6-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination Therapy</td>
<td>6-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pegylated Interferon</td>
<td>6-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dosing</td>
<td>6-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side Effects</td>
<td>6-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in Mental State</td>
<td>6-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anemia and Respiratory Ailments</td>
<td>6-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Treatment Benefit the Patient?</td>
<td>6-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment Failure</td>
<td>6-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV Co-Infection</td>
<td>6-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cost Effectiveness</strong></td>
<td>6-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Test Scenario</td>
<td>6-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Estimating</td>
<td>6-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Cost Analysis Using Current Assumptions</td>
<td>6-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Addendum: NIH Consensus Panel Update, June 10–12, 2002</strong></td>
<td>6-30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 7: Developing a Correctional Dental Program

Stages of Development .......................................................... 7-1
  Assessment ................................................................. 7-2
  Classification ............................................................ 7-2
  Examination .............................................................. 7-2
  Routine Care .............................................................. 7-3
    Administration and Practitioner Philosophy ....................... 7-3
    Available Resources .................................................. 7-3
    Patient Desires ....................................................... 7-4
Clinical Management .......................................................... 7-4
  Records ............................................................... 7-4
  Appointments ............................................................ 7-7
  Aseptic Control ............................................................ 7-8
  Inventory/Needle Counts .................................................. 7-8
Quality Assurance ........................................................... 7-8
  The Role of Teledentistry .................................................. 7-9
    Transmission Lines and Cost Considerations ....................... 7-10
      Bandwidth ............................................................. 7-10
      Protocols ........................................................... 7-11
    Determining the Benefits ............................................. 7-11
    Availability of Resources ............................................... 7-13
  Reaping the Most From the Program ................................... 7-13
Conclusion ........................................................................ 7-13

Chapter 8: Dental Emergencies: A Primer for Non-Dental Health Professionals in Correctional Settings

Introduction ................................................................. 8-2
Dental Injuries .............................................................. 8-2
  Anatomical Review .......................................................... 8-2
  Numbering System ........................................................... 8-3
  Pre-Existing Factors ......................................................... 8-3
  Patient Assessment ........................................................ 8-4
Evaluation of Injuries to the Dentition ................................ 8-5
  Intra-Oral Evaluation of Injuries ......................................... 8-5
  Fractures of Teeth .......................................................... 8-5
  Concussed Tooth Injury .................................................... 8-6
  Luxation Injury .............................................................. 8-6
  Avulsion Injury ............................................................. 8-7
  Toothaches ................................................................. 8-7
Clinical Considerations ...................................................... 8-8
  Intra-Oral Soft Tissue Injury ............................................... 8-8
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Alveolar Bone Fracture .................................................. 8-9
Summary of Intra-Oral Injuries and Intervention ................... 8-9
Facial Injuries .............................................................. 8-10
  Injury to the Soft Tissue ........................................... 8-10
  The Facial Nerve ..................................................... 8-10
Traumatic Injury of the Facial Bones (Maxillo-Facial Complex) ... 8-11
  The Stair-Step Effect ............................................... 8-11
Antibiotic Therapy for Dental Infections ............................. 8-12
Treatment of Facial Fractures .......................................... 8-13

Chapter 9: Elderly Inmates: An Emerging Correctional Population
Introduction ................................................................. 9-2
Levinson’s Theory of Adult Development .............................. 9-3
The Graying of the Inmate Population ................................ 9-4
  Statistics ............................................................... 9-4
The Profile of the Older Offender ...................................... 9-5
Reasons for Criminal Behavior ......................................... 9-5
Impact of Prison Environment on the Elderly ......................... 9-6
  Special Unit at Ionia ................................................. 9-7
Other Factors ............................................................... 9-8
Disciplinary Experiences of Elderly Prisoners ......................... 9-9
Inmate Population Growth and Distribution ........................... 9-10
  Federal Prison System ............................................... 9-10
  New Jersey Prison System ........................................... 9-10
Steps to Maintaining Health ............................................ 9-11
  Health Status of the Incarcerated Elderly ......................... 9-12
Cost of Care ............................................................... 9-13
Age-Related Physical Changes ......................................... 9-14
  Sensation ............................................................... 9-15
  Pain ..................................................................... 9-15
  Smell and Taste ...................................................... 9-15
  Touch ................................................................. 9-15
  Cardiovascular Changes ............................................. 9-15
  Respiratory Tract .................................................... 9-15
  Nervous System ...................................................... 9-16
  Tremors .............................................................. 9-16
  Vision ............................................................... 9-16
  Hearing .............................................................. 9-16
  Sleep and Rest ...................................................... 9-17
  Skin ................................................................. 9-17
  Extremities .......................................................... 9-17
Chapter 10: Use of Telemedicine in Corrections: Clinical and Practical Implications

Why Correctional Telemedicine? ........................................ 10-1
Brief History of Correctional Telemedicine ............................ 10-2
The Fundamentals of a Successful Program ......................... 10-3
  Patient Selection ....................................................... 10-4
  Physician Participation ............................................ 10-4
    Time Requirements .............................................. 10-4
    Reimbursement .................................................. 10-5
    Liability ........................................................... 10-5
    Time Efficiency .................................................. 10-5
  Equipment Selection ............................................... 10-6
    Equipment Placement .......................................... 10-6
    Lighting and Sound Quality .................................. 10-6
  Telecommunications Options .................................... 10-7
  Staff Support ....................................................... 10-8
Funding Models ......................................................... 10-8
Other Considerations ................................................... 10-9
  Multiple Uses for the Equipment ................................ 10-9
  Common Mistakes to Avoid ....................................... 10-9
  Future Directions .................................................. 10-9
Chapter 11: Health Issues of Juvenile Offenders
A Contemporary Predicament ...................................... 11-1
  Threats to Adolescent Health .................................. 11-2
  Increased Threat to Incarcerated Youth ....................... 11-2
  Female Juvenile Offenders ...................................... 11-3
Provision of Health Services in Incarcerated Settings ........ 11-4
  Staffing ............................................................ 11-4
  Expenses ........................................................... 11-4
  Health Status Statistics ......................................... 11-5
  Health Screening at Intake ...................................... 11-6
  Full Medical Assessment ....................................... 11-6
Health-Related Issues ............................................. 11-7
  Sexually Transmitted Diseases ................................. 11-7
  Pregnancy .......................................................... 11-8
  Substance Abuse .................................................. 11-8
  Female Juvenile Offenders ...................................... 11-9
  Mental Health Issues ............................................. 11-10
    Female Offenders .............................................. 11-10
    Sexual Abuse and Mental Illness ............................. 11-10
    Other Emotional Disorders .................................. 11-10
Prevention and Treatment Advocacy ............................ 11-11
  Health Education and Services ................................. 11-11
  The Need for Advocacy ......................................... 11-12

Part 3: Mental Health Care

Chapter 12: Trends in Correctional Mental Health Care
Introduction ......................................................... 12-2
Demographics ....................................................... 12-2
  Race and Gender Characteristics .............................. 12-3
  Rates of Incarceration ......................................... 12-3
  Mental Illness Statistics ....................................... 12-3
  Co-Morbidity of Mental Disorder and Substance Abuse .... 12-4
    Antisocial Personality Disorder ............................. 12-4
Costs of Incarceration ........................................... 12-5
  Operating Expenses ............................................. 12-5
  Health Care ....................................................... 12-6
Privatization ....................................................... 12-6
  Advantages ....................................................... 12-7
  Disadvantages ................................................... 12-8
  Outsourcing of Mental Health Services ...................... 12-8
Supermax Prisons ................................................................. 12-9
  “Supermax” Defined ......................................................... 12-9
  Effect on Inmates ............................................................ 12-10
  Role of the Mental Health Clinician ..................................... 12-10
  Mental Health Programs Inside the Supermax ......................... 12-11
Segregation Units ............................................................... 12-12
  Placement Guidelines ....................................................... 12-12
  Disciplinary Hearing Procedures ........................................ 12-13
Discharge Planning ............................................................. 12-13
  Scope of Services ........................................................... 12-14
  Guidelines ........................................................................ 12-15
  Case Law ......................................................................... 12-15
Suicide Prevention ............................................................... 12-16
  Flaws in Rate Calculations ................................................ 12-17
  Persistent Population Variables ......................................... 12-17
Conclusion ......................................................................... 12-18

Chapter 13: Jail Diversion and Correctional Psychotropic Medication Formularies

  Introduction ........................................................................ 13-1
  Jail Diversion Programs ....................................................... 13-2
    Pre-Booking Programs ...................................................... 13-2
    Post-Booking Programs ..................................................... 13-3
    Impact on Correctional Systems ........................................ 13-4
  Use of Psychotropic Medications as Standard of Care ................. 13-5
  “Traditional” or “First Generation” Antipsychotic Medications ........ 13-5
  “Atypical” or “New Generation” Antipsychotic Medications .......... 13-7
    Potential Disadvantages .................................................... 13-8
    Potential Advantages ....................................................... 13-8
    Accepted Standard of Care ................................................ 13-9
  Antidepressant Medications .................................................. 13-10
    Tricyclics ....................................................................... 13-10
    Serotonin-Specific Re-Uptake Inhibitors ................................. 13-10
    Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors .......................................... 13-10
    Other Antidepressants ...................................................... 13-11
  Mood-Stabilizing Medications ............................................... 13-12
  Medications for the Treatment of Other Serious Disorders .......... 13-12
Conclusion ......................................................................... 13-13
Chapter 14: How One Misdemeanor Mental Health Court Incorporates Therapeutic Jurisprudence, Preventive Law, and Restorative Justice

An Innovative Approach ............................................................... 14-2
Background and Development of the Mental Health Court ......... 14-3
Mental Illness and Public Safety ................................................... 14-5
  Ensuring Beneficial Outcomes .................................................. 14-6
  Timeline for Operation ............................................................ 14-6
Theoretical Basis and Philosophy of the Court ......................... 14-7
  Restorative Justice, Preventive Law ......................................... 14-7
  Accountability ........................................................................ 14-8
  Associated Risks .................................................................... 14-9
How the Clark County Mental Health Court Works ................. 14-9
  Initial Attempts to Identify Potential Inmate-Clients ............. 14-9
  “One Stop Shopping” and the Intake Process ......................... 14-10
  Resource and Coordination Difficulties ................................. 14-10
  The Role of Judges and Judicial Assistants ......................... 14-11
A Typical Week's Docket ............................................................ 14-11
  Initial Appearance .................................................................. 14-11
  Legal Staffing ........................................................................ 14-12
  Alternatives to Incarceration ............................................... 14-12
  Probation vs. “Caseworker” Approach ................................. 14-12
Other Important Court Considerations ................................. 14-13
  Education and Outreach ......................................................... 14-13
  Coordination with Other Courts ........................................... 14-14
  Evaluation .............................................................................. 14-14
Best Practices in Mental Health Courts ................................. 14-15
  Risk Management .................................................................. 14-15
  Dangerousness ....................................................................... 14-16
  Positive Reinforcement ........................................................ 14-17
  Intermediate Sanctions .......................................................... 14-17
Ten Principles of the Clark County Mental Health Court .......... 14-18
Conclusion ................................................................................. 14-20

Chapter 15: Correctional Health Services as an Opportunity to Reduce Violence

Violence as Injury ..................................................................... 15-1
Perspectives on Injury .............................................................. 15-2
  Public Health Perspective—Preventive Measures .............. 15-2
  Correctional Health Perspective—Reducing Violence Victimization .......................... 15-2
Criminal Justice System Response to Injury ............................................. 15-3
  Intentional Injuries Among Inmates .................................................. 15-3
  Increased Risk of Violence-Related Injury on Release ...................... 15-5
  Injury Surveillance ............................................................................. 15-6
Practicing Prevention ........................................................................ 15-7
  Primary Prevention .......................................................................... 15-7
  Secondary Prevention ....................................................................... 15-8
  Tertiary Prevention .......................................................................... 15-11
Correctional Opportunities ................................................................ 15-11

Part 4: Administrative Issues

Chapter 16: The Nursing Shortage – Implications for Corrections
A Global Problem .............................................................................. 16-2
Current Trends .................................................................................. 16-2
  Slower RN Growth Rates ................................................................. 16-2
  Reasons for the Current Decline ....................................................... 16-3
  Increased Demand for Services ......................................................... 16-4
The Correctional Environment .......................................................... 16-5
  A Growing Population With Greater Needs .................................... 16-5
Impact of Shortage on Care ............................................................... 16-6
  Location ......................................................................................... 16-6
  Recruitment and Pay Scales ............................................................ 16-6
  Overworked Staff .......................................................................... 16-7
  Temporary/Agency Personnel .......................................................... 16-7
  Absences, Burn-Out, and Turnover .................................................. 16-7
  Labor Issues ................................................................................... 16-7
  Nursing Management ..................................................................... 16-8
Methods for Coping with the Shortage .............................................. 16-8
  Short-Term and Interim Solutions ...................................................... 16-8
    Rate Adjustments ......................................................................... 16-9
    Shift/Bonus Incentives .................................................................. 16-10
    Flexible Scheduling ...................................................................... 16-10
    Leave Time .................................................................................. 16-10
    Staffing Alternatives .................................................................... 16-11
    Long-Term Solutions .................................................................... 16-12
Conclusion ......................................................................................... 16-12

Chapter 17: Reducing and Containing Cost in Correctional Health Care
The Rising Cost of Correctional Health Care ...................................... 17-1
Improving Health Care Financial Information ................................... 17-2
  Fiscal Intermediary ........................................................................ 17-2
Increased Inmate Responsibility ................................................. 17-3
Inmate User Fees ........................................................................ 17-4
Pros and Cons ............................................................................. 17-4
NCCHC Guidelines ..................................................................... 17-6
Recommended Standards of Care ............................................... 17-7
Management Issues That Affect Cost ....................................... 17-8
Early Release of Elderly and Terminally Ill Inmates .................. 17-8
Prevention and Education Programs ........................................... 17-9
Improving Productivity ............................................................... 17-9
Medical Trips Outside the Prison ................................................. 17-10
Contracts With Emergency Services .......................................... 17-11
Medical Staffing Structure ......................................................... 17-11
Other Cost Reducing Strategies ................................................ 17-11
The Benefits of Telemedicine ..................................................... 17-11
Sharing of Government Services ............................................... 17-13
Design and Location of Health Care Facility ............................. 17-13
Other Solutions ........................................................................... 17-14
Complications of Some Cost-Reducing Strategies ....................... 17-15
Summary ...................................................................................... 17-15

Chapter 18: Security for Medical Professionals in a Correctional Environment
Introduction ................................................................................. 18-1
Contraband Issues ........................................................................ 18-2
How Contraband Enters a Facility ............................................. 18-3
Use and Storage of Instruments and Medicines ......................... 18-3
Interaction Between Health Care Staff and Inmates .................... 18-5
Keep Your Attention From Straying ........................................... 18-5
Know Your Facility’s Policies ..................................................... 18-7
Avoid Over-Familiarity ............................................................... 18-7
Provide Prompt and Adequate Medical Care ......................... 18-8
Do Not Use Inmate Labor in Medical Areas ............................ 18-10
Providing Health Care vs. Facility Security ............................... 18-10
Use of Restraints ........................................................................ 18-12
Summary ...................................................................................... 18-13

Chapter 19: An Evaluation of the Quality and Cost of Health Care in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Prison System
Introduction ................................................................................. 19-2
Purpose and Scope of Study ........................................................ 19-2
Background .................................................................................. 19-2
Time Period of Study ................................................................... 19-3
Statistics on Cost and Inmate Population ........................................ 19-4
Managed Care Partnership .............................................................. 19-4
Sample Selection ............................................................................. 19-4
Methodology .................................................................................... 19-5
Data Analysis: Comparison of Compliance
Before, and Under, Managed Care ..................................................... 19-5
Aspects of Managed Care Analysis ................................................... 19-9
Organization and Administration ....................................................... 19-9
Restructuring .................................................................................... 19-9
Staffing Analysis .............................................................................. 19-11
Vacancy Rates .................................................................................. 19-11
Pharmaceutical Services ................................................................... 19-12
Sick Call ........................................................................................... 19-15
Preventive Health Care ..................................................................... 19-17
Utilization Management ................................................................... 19-18
Telemedicine ..................................................................................... 19-20
Mortality Rates ................................................................................ 19-21
Cost of Health Care .......................................................................... 19-22
Monitoring of Services ...................................................................... 19-23
Conclusion ........................................................................................ 19-24

Chapter 20: The Elements of Continuous Quality Improvement
What Is Continuous Quality Improvement? ....................................... 20-2
The CQI Committee ......................................................................... 20-2
The Quality Improvement Cycle ....................................................... 20-5
Step 1—Identify the Issue to Be Studied ........................................... 20-5
Step 2—Determine Desired Outcomes and
How They Can Be Measured ............................................................. 20-6
Step 3—Measure the Outcomes and Record the Findings ............. 20-7
Step 4—Compare the Findings Against Desired Outcomes ........... 20-7
Step 5—Develop a Plan of Correction .............................................. 20-7
Step 6—Implement the Changes ...................................................... 20-8
Step 7—Return to Step 3 and Monitor the Changed Process ......... 20-8
Step 8—Review Performance if Outcome Standards Are Met ....... 20-8
Other Factors Relevant to the CQI Process .................................... 20-9
Data Sources ................................................................................... 20-9
Confidentiality ................................................................................. 20-9
Peer Review ....................................................................................... 20-10
Outcome Measures ......................................................................... 20-11
Credentials and Privileges ............................................................... 20-11
# Table of Contents

- Standards .................................................. 20-12
- Accreditation .............................................. 20-13
- Problems Requiring Adverse Action ..................... 20-13
- Sample CQI Cycle ........................................ 20-14
- Historical Comments ....................................... 20-19
- Statistical Variation ...................................... 20-19
- Prescriptives for Quality Control ....................... 20-20
- Relation to Correctional Health Care ..................... 20-22

**Appendix 1:** National Commission on Correctional Health Care Clinical Guidelines for Correctional Facilities ......................... A-1

**Appendix 2:** Bibliography ...................................... A-39

**Index** ............................................................ I-1