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Population Health Library Research Award

There are currently 13,000 people incarcerated in Washington. Each one of them, according to the National Institute of Health, are more likely than their non-incarcerated counterparts to develop chronic illness, experience severe violence, develop mental health disorders, and disproportionately suffer from SARS-CoV-2 infections. For every year incarcerated, there is a two-year decline of life expectancy (Patterson 2013).

My research explores the effects of unanticipated early release for individuals sentenced to life. This research is particularly aligned with two pillars of UW's public health initiative: human health and social and economic equity. For the former, this research traces the trajectory of an individual's experience while incarcerated, including both physical and mental health, and explores how early release facilitates comparative well-being. For the latter, this research explores how pathways to release, as well as to re-entry, are impacted by inequitable social and economic factors. For instance, a low socioeconomic status was common in individual's explanations of their pathway to prison. Upon release, social inequality was exacerbated as individuals left prison with little resources and a new stigmatized "felon" title. This meant that employment, housing, and desirability would now be fiercely difficult to obtain, all factors that increase the likelihood of recidivism.

The impacts of incarceration - both in and out of the carceral state - constitute new and exacerbate already-existing public health issues related to health and inequality. By amplifying incarcerated people's experiences, this research parallels UW's Public Health Initiative to center community and create an equitable, healthy society for all.

Word Count: 248

Works Cited

Patterson, Evelyn J. 2013. "The Dose–Response of Time Served in Prison on Mortality: New York State, 1989–2003." *American Journal of Public Health* 103:523–528.