

Mass Incarceration *On Our Watch*

Scott A. Allen, MD
Clinical Associate Professor
School of Medicine
University of California, Riverside

Mass Incarceration

- *How did this happen?*

Mass Incarceration

- *How did this happen on our watch?*



The Medical Profession and Prisons

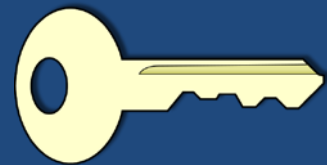
- Doctors were present at the creation (asylums and prisons grew up side by side – both with rehabilitative missions)
- Doctors remain essential and even foundational to the existence of prisons (U.S. Supreme Court, 1976 and 2011) and the participation of medical professionals confers legitimacy on prisons.

On our watch

- Community supports for mental health and addiction did not receive adequate resources.
- At the same time the populations of prisons grew
- Disproportionately people with untreated or undertreated medical problems (addiction and mental health) were incarcerated in large numbers.

Fact

- A very large number of people with untreated or undertreated addiction and mental illness were ultimately incarcerated in *security controlled punitive settings where treatment is an afterthought* if it occurs at all.
- The medical profession went along for the ride.



Why?

- Dual loyalty pressures on doctors
- Under those pressures, medical professionalism gets squeezed
- This is a failure of the medical profession (both inside *and* outside the walls of the prison)

Elements of Medical Professionalism

- Altruism and commitment to Patient Interests
- Physician Self-Regulation
- Maintenance of Technical Competence
- Civic Engagement



COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

*College of Physicians
and Surgeons*

DUAL LOYALTY PRESSURE

- ~~Altruism~~ and commitment to Patient Interests
- Physician Self-Regulation
- Maintenance of Technical Competence
- ~~Civic Engagement~~



COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

*College of Physicians
and Surgeons*

How should we respond?

- Take ownership of our role
- Assert our medical leadership
- Leverage the moral authority of our profession
- Become *civically engaged* and push for policies that are in the *best interests of the health and welfare of our patients*

