

The Weaponization of Suboxone Strips: An Evolving Situation and Tactics in the “Perpetual Battle” for Control in America's Prisons

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“They call us walkin' corpses, unholy living dead
They wanna lock us up, in this [American] hell”
– Misfits, “London Dungeon”

With the advent of the opioid and opiate crisis in America, Suboxone in the form of sublingual film, i.e. “strips”, has apparently become one of the tactical weapons used by prison administrators to maintain control inside prisons across the country. Albeit, a hidden one, as Suboxone is officially considered contraband, therefore its possession and/or use in prison is illegal. Nevertheless, many prison administrators appear to have turned a blind eye towards the flood of contraband Suboxone strips smuggled into their prisons, as a tactic of situational control. They make a show of trying to stop it by instituting more restrictive mail and visitation policies, but it is *only* for show, as they know over 80% of all contraband smuggled into prisons, including Suboxone strips, is smuggled in by their employees. See Rand W. Gould, “New Mail Policy in Michigan Prisons”, *San Francisco Bayview*, Jan. 2018, 3 (also at: www.freerandgould.com); and *Akers v McGinnis*, 352F3d 1030 (6th Cir. 2003).

Prison administrators have long known how effective the tactic of pharmaceutical straitjackets can be in controlling prisoners. At the very least, they've known this since the states started closing mental health hospitals, i.e. insane asylums, in the early 1960s, while filling prisons with their former patients. At any given prison in Michigan, nearly half the population is legally medicated and, currently, a substantial percentage is illegally “self-medicated” via Suboxone strips and/or other illegal drugs smuggled into its state prisons. This does not appear to be an accident.

The somewhat subtle use of pharmaceuticals, Suboxone strips in particular, as a tactic to control prisoners, constitutes what “might be called the political technology of the body” in the prison administrators' “perpetual battle” for domination within prisons, as well as part of the “machinery of power”. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. By Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 26 & 183. This “political anatomy” is applied as a tactic in the battle, or war, to produce “docile bodies”. *Ibid*, 138 (internal quotes omitted). And it is a war, “a continuation of politics by other means,” which “cannot for a single minute be separated from politics”. See Karl Von Clausewitz, *On War* (1833) and Mao Zedong, *Lecture* (1938), respectively. As Detroit's Fredy Perlman put it: “Politics...[is] the cancer.” See *Letters of Insurgents* (1976), 196.

For a long time, the Michigan Department of Corrections' (MDOC), like many other state DOCs, primary weapon for controlling prisoners was television (TV). It was an especially effective tactic, when combined with drugs like tobacco (legal), marijuana and heroin (illegal), producing a relatively docile prisoner population. So effective, in fact, that in 1998-1999, when then-governor John Engler threatened to remove TVs from state prisons as a form of further punishment, the MDOC employees union went all out to successfully stop him. It seems the guards were not willing to deal with less distracted, more conscious, less docile prisoners that would have resulted if TVs were removed. With legal tobacco long gone from Michigan prisons, and marijuana, heroin, meth, etc, harder to smuggle in, Suboxone strips have become, whether intentionally or by default, a primary weapon for the production of docile and easily controlled prisoners.

Suboxone is the trade name for the combination drug formulation of buprenorphine and naloxone. See Wikipedia at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/buprenorphine/naloxone>. Aside from its ease

of smuggling into prisons, and pharmaceutical corporation profits, this writer does not know why it's manufactured in the form of sublingual film, or strips. It is, however, flooding into prisons all over the country in such large quantities that it constitutes an epidemic of epic proportions, which needs to be stopped.

An epidemic, in part, due to the various state DOC's perpetual budget crunch, while engaging in the “perpetual battle” to control prisoners. In Michigan, this has resulted in guards' jobs being reduced from decent paying positions with a good pension and job security to just another low-wage, dead-end job not much better than those at Amazon or Wal-Mart. Consequently, many MDOC employees are willing to risk losing their jobs to make the extra money smuggling Suboxone strips and other contraband into prisons, which is easy to do as evidenced by the fact that over 80% of all contraband in prisons comes in via employees.

It is an epidemic that MDOC, apparently, is doing little or nothing to stop. Prisoners repeatedly found guilty for possession or use of Suboxone strips are rarely, if ever, denied parole for such misconduct. MDOC employees are rarely, if ever, prosecuted. At least it appears there are proportionally very few prosecutions in concern of the Suboxone flooding into Michigan prisons.

As such, one can only conclude the epidemic of Suboxone use in Michigan prisons, and those across the country, is no accident, and like the “opioid crisis” outside these fences, is a deliberate tactic to render a potentially revolutionary population docile and easily controlled. People numbed by painkillers, or desperately searching for them to stay numb, are unlikely to become activists, let alone revolutionary fighters, in the “perpetual” global war waged on the poor and working class by the masters—the Scum-in-charge of Kleptocracy (SICK)—in order to maintain their positions of power and control, while spreading their SICKness, the disease of capitalism and civilization, to every corner of the world.

The solution to this Gordian Knot is simply a case of cutting off the chains of this SICKness, whether it be Suboxone or another drug, by picking up a sword and using it, as Ursula K. LeGuin put it in “spell”.

An unknottng. A disbraidment. A great magic. What is magic?
I release me.

A good, and necessary, first step. The second would be to make the manufacture and sale of Suboxone strips illegal across the country and the world. Especially, if we want more prisoners to wake up, get off their bunks, and join the battle for the abolition of prisons!

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