

PROPOSITION DE COMMUNICATION

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Titre :

Identifying, classifying and watching suicidal prisoners : the dilemma of suicide prevention in prison

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Résumé :

In Canada, deaths and suicides have long been ignored by correctional authorities. However, over the past decades, suicide prevention has become an issue and a major area for prison practices reform. This paper aims to understand this change of policy and its meaning regarding the evolution of prison. Drawing on a sociohistorical approach, it starts by focusing on the process by which suicide in prison became a social problem. It then outlines the registers of actions drafted by the Correctional Services of Canada and the way they struggle with the limits of a penal and disciplinary institution. Based on a documentary analysis of official, scientific, media and activist sources, our study shows that what changed in the late 1970s is not suicide in prison itself, but the way in which this phenomenon is part of a broader framework. Indeed, after being an object of moral and penal reprobation, suicide became a public health issue. This led to the development of tools to identify, classify and watch people at risk of suicide, including prisoners. Actions regarding the prevention of suicide therefore reactivate the traditional techniques of detention's regulation used to monitor, prevent escapes and maintain order. As a consequence, suffering prisoners encounter a new form of injustice : when in society, suicide prevention aims to give people the desire to live, in prison, it prevents them from having the means to commit suicide, settling an important dilemma between freedom and restriction.