

July 20, 2008

Scotland's award-winning independent newspaper

Est 1999

HOME

NEWS

INTERNATIONAL

OPINION & DEBATE

SPORT

BUSINESS

ARTS

LIFE

CARS

DIGITAL

<<Back to index

+ Larger type | - Smaller type

Inmate's pleas for aid overlooked four days before death

Fellow prisoners allege staff said Sorley was 'at it' By Kate Smith

 Comment | Read Comments (1)

A PRISONER died from suspected meningitis after pleas for medical help from his cell were overlooked by warders at Kilmarnock Prison, a Fatal Accident Inquiry is likely to hear.

Andrew Sorley had previously fallen into a coma with the disease and it will be claimed he knew the symptoms. As he begged to be taken to hospital, it is alleged that staff at Scotland's only private jail dismissed his claims, saying he was "at it".

Medics did not attend to Sorley until 13 hours after his initial calls for help and he later died at the Southern General Hospital in Glasgow on June 20. The death, which will be the subject of a Fatal Accident Inquiry (FAI), raises questions about public health issues and contagion in prisons.

Fellow inmates say Sorley, serving two years for carrying two knives in public, was heard banging on the door of his cell pleading for help. Prisoners later tried to revive him after he had collapsed on the floor of his cell.

Prisoner Peter Simpson told the Sunday Herald that warders checked on Sorley three times during the night but he did not receive medical help until 9am.

Simpson, serving six years for stabbing a man who had shot him in an earlier attack, said he desperately tried to help Sorley in his cell the next morning.

Sorley's medical records were not sent with the patient to Crosshouse Hospital in Kilmarnock, and as a result diagnosis was delayed, Simpson claims.

Figures from the Scottish Prison Service reveal that HMP Kilmarnock has a higher than average number of deaths in custody in Scotland, the Sunday Herald can exclusively reveal. The UK has the highest level of deaths in custody in Europe. Prisoners are entitled to prompt medical attention and care under prison rule 33 and the European Convention on Human Rights.

Simpson said Sorley had complained of feeling unwell as early as 8pm on the evening of Monday, June 16. He claims: "It is also known that prison staff were aware of Drew's medical status as a head-injured person and that he had previously been in a coma as a result of meningitis.

"Drew appeared in some distress. He appeared completely disorientated

Article Tools

 Print this story

 Email to a friend

NEW AND IMPROVED

ODEON

ODEON BRAEHEAD
FOR BRAEHEAD
FILM LISTINGS
CLICK HERE

ODEON GLASGOW QUAY
FOR GLASGOW
QUAY FILM
LISTINGS
CLICK HERE

iTravelShop
We know what you want from a holiday

iTravelShop
Airport Parking

iTravelShop
Holiday Insurance

and needed to lean on the walls to steady himself. It was as if he was drunk.

"Drew was by this time lying on the floor of his cell and a prisoner was present when Drew told an officer that he knew what was wrong with him. He told the officer that he had suffered from meningitis in the past and said the last time he had experienced symptoms like this, his family called an ambulance and Drew fell into a coma for three days.

Simpson claimed staff said they would see what they could do, but as the officer walked back to the D wing with the prisoner, it is alleged that the second prisoner was told Drew was "at it", and "he was probably suffering from the flu and was only looking for tablets".

A month before he died, it is alleged Sorley complained to prison authorities and submitted a formal medical complaint claiming he was being denied access to proper medical care.

A Scottish government spokesman said: "The justice secretary Kenny McAskill has repeatedly said that we will put public safety, not private profit, at the heart of our coherent prisons policy."

The Crown Office declined to disclose how many FAIs had been held from deaths at Kilmarnock prison, or the total number of FAIs for all prisons in Scotland.

Serco, the private company that runs HMP Kilmarnock, confirmed there is a nurse or qualified paramedic on each night shift.

A spokeswoman said: "We are not in a position to comment on the cause of death. We are waiting for the post mortem results.

"We can confirm that our prison officers have first aid training, but cannot confirm that all the officers working that night had first aid training. A trained nurse was on duty that night. We are running our own internal inquiry into the death of Andrew Sorley."

She refused to confirm or deny any of the details of the incident.

Share this story on: [Digg](#) | [del.icio.us](#) | [Furl](#) | [reddit](#) | [NowPublic](#) | [Yahoo!](#)

 [Add Comment](#)

Posted by: coyoteman, Glasgow on 10:00am today

What a disaster for the prisoner but they were lucky it wasn't an outbreak. Meningitis needs immediate treatment with antibiotics as soon as symptoms appear to prevent death otherwise it is generally too late. But it doesn't need to be fatal. There is also the danger of the spread to other prisoners, officers and visitors and they should be treated with antibiotics immediately. By not getting the nurse on night shift to see the man, the lives of everyone were put at risk.

[Quote](#) | [Report this post](#)

Add your comment

Name:

Email: *

Location:

**



e.g. 123-123

Comment:

Please note: All HTML tags will be ignored.

Format Text:

By posting a comment, I confirm that I have read and agree to the [terms of use](#). Comments are not moderated but we will react if anything that breaks the rules comes to our attention and we may delete inappropriate postings. Please treat other people with respect. You must not post anything that is abusive, indecent, unlawful or defamatory. Remember, you are personally liable for what you post on this site. If you wish to complain about a comment, contact us [here](#).

* Your email address will not be displayed

** To avoid [register now](#) or [login](#)

©2008 newsquest (sunday herald) limited. all rights reserved

[Terms & Conditions](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)