

Report Compiled by Kat Brady, Community Alliance on Prisons
December 7, 2005

This report is compiled from numerous phone conversations with and letters from our women.

Hawai'i currently has 120 women incarcerated at Otter Creek Correctional Center in Wheelwright, Kentucky (Floyd County) since October 2005. Wheelwright is an abandoned mining town with a population of 1,000 - 650 of whom are inmates.

Since arriving at Otter Creek, our women have been plagued with diarrhea and vomiting. I suspect that this is from the water, where e-coli was found. I wrote to Frank Lopez in August to ensure that before Hawai'i sent anyone there, the water situation must be resolved. I never received an answer or acknowledge of my letter. I am on a number of national lists and have been corresponding with people in Kentucky who told me that the water comes from an abandoned mine shaft. Apparently nothing was done before we placed our women there.

There is a very serious situation happening right now:

Hawai'i inmate Rowena Robinson was coughing up blood. She finally was allowed to go to the medical unit, where she was treated for a sinus infection and given "Deep Sea" a nasal moisturizer despite the fact that she was coughing up blood in front of the medical staff.

On December 1, 2005 I was advised by another inmate that Ms. Robinson was rushed to the hospital in shackles and at gunpoint because she was coughing up blood and had trouble breathing. I was told that she was med-evaced, but didn't know if that was by helicopter or ambulance. When Ms. Robinson got to the hospital one lung was filled with blood and she needed emergency surgery.

The surgery was performed at Hazard Regional Medical Center by Dr. Koura.

On Monday, December 5, 2005, Rowena Robinson called me. She was worried because she was awoken at 3 a.m. and told to report to the medical unit. (Sadly, this practice is not uncommon at Otter Creek.) When she got there, there was a Kentucky inmate who was being treated for an open wound. When the medical practitioner then turned to Ms. Robinson and told her they were going to do some blood work on her (without changing gloves), Ms. Robinson refused and said that she would rather have Dr. Koura do it at her follow-up appointment. Nurse Newsome told Ms. Robinson that no one knew of her follow up appointment and that her medical file was missing and proceeded to accuse Ms. Robinson of taking it. Ms. Robinson told me that she never saw her file. Dr. Koura, the lung specialist who performed her surgery had set a December 8th follow up appointment for a chest ex-ray and blood work, Ms. Robinson said.

Ms. Robinson told me that the doctor told her that if she had waited 2 more days, she would have been dead. She told me that the doctor told her that the tissue in her lungs froze and tore, allowing blood to enter her lungs.

I have tried to reach warden Joyce Arnold on Monday, December 5th and Tuesday, December 6th but she either wasn't available or had left already. **On Tuesday, December 6, 2005**, I spoke with the Assistant Warden, Mr. Little at 8 AM Hawai'i time to ensure that Ms. Robinson would be taken to Dr. Koura's office on Thursday, December 8th for her follow-up appointment. I told him that Ms. Robinson appeared to be mis-diagnosed by the prison's medical department and treated for a sinus infection, while she coughed up blood in view of the medical staff. I told him that other inmates reported to me that Ms. Robinson was med-evaced in the middle of the night at gunpoint and in shackles to Hazard Regional Medical Center. He responded that no one was med-evaced from the prison. I told him that I didn't know if it was by ambulance or helicopter, but that she was rushed to the hospital in the middle of the night. He told me he would check into it and I could call him back in 2 hours.

I called him at 10:15 AM Hawai'i time on **Tuesday, December 6, 2005** and he told me that he had checked into the situation. He reported that the prison's medical department treated Ms. Robinson appropriately and yes, she was brought to the hospital for surgery. When I asked for his assurance that Ms. Robinson would be brought to her follow-up appointment with Dr. Koura he told me that her file (which apparently miraculously appeared) had no mention of a follow-up appointment with Dr. Koura and the prison's medical staff would do the follow up. (Now I don't think one needs a medical degree to know that a follow-up appointment after surgery is normal practice.)

He told me he couldn't speak about her medical condition because of HIPA laws, and I told him I understood that, but only wanted to ensure that Ms. Robinson would have her follow up appointment with Dr. Koura. He reiterated that there was no mention of a follow-up appointment in her file and that the prison called Dr. Koura's office and there was no follow-up appointment scheduled. I asked Assistant Warden Little the name of the doctor at Otter Creek. He didn't know the prison doctor's name, but said he was affiliated with a Kentucky University.

I asked if the prison's medical unit was certified by the Kentucky Health Department. He told me that they are not licensed, but the Health Department inspected the medical unit.

I then (**Tuesday, December 6, 2005**) called Hazard Regional Medical Center and asked for Dr. Koura's phone number - (606) 487-1818. I called his office, but he was teaching in Lexington yesterday and not available. I spoke with his nurse, Helen, and explained the situation. She confirmed that Ms. Robinson was scheduled for a follow-up appointment on Thursday, December 8th and that was the normal protocol after surgery. She said that she would talk to Dr. Koura about the situation and asked for my phone number if he needed to call.

This morning, **Wednesday, December 7, 2005**, I called Dr. Koura's office but he was gone for the day. I spoke with Helen and asked if she spoke with Dr. Koura about Ms. Robinson's situation. She said she had and again confirmed Ms. Robinson's December 8th appointment. I told her that the prison told me that there was no follow-up appointment scheduled, she said that her records showed that there was an appointment scheduled for Thursday, December 8, 2005 and Dr. Koura wanted to do another chest ex-ray.

I also called Warden Joyce Arnold today (Wednesday, December 7, 2005) and was told she was gone for the day. I asked what her hours were and was told she works from 8 AM - 4 PM. I then called the prison back and asked to speak with Ms. Robinson and was told I'd have to talk with the warden. When I asked 'Chief Tina' (the name she gave me) what the warden's hours are, I was told 8 AM - 5 PM.

I then called Lorraine Robinson, Director of T.J.Mahoney's Ka Hale Ho`ala Hou No Na Wahine, to ask if she knew Rowena Robinson. She did and told me that 'she's not a faker, very smart and articulate, a drug addict.' This confirmed my impression of Ms. Robinson, who I commend for not allowing unitarily medical work, i.e. the blood work the medical unit wanted to do on Monday, December 5, 2005 at 3 AM Kentucky time). It takes courage for any inmate to refuse prison orders. She told me that she knew she was vulnerable because of her post-operative condition and didn't want to die.

MY CONCLUSIONS:

1. Otter Creek Correctional Center is covering up their mis-diagnosis. How they possibly believe Ms. Robinson had a sinus infection when she was coughing up blood and had difficulty breathing in full view of the medical staff?
2. If Ms. Robinson did indeed have a sinus infection, why was there blood in her lungs and required emergency

surgery?

3. Why doesn't the Assistant Warden know the name of the doctor in the prison's medical unit?

4. It is sadly clear that no one really knows what is going on at Otter Creek. Women are called to the medical unit or security in the middle of the night. Is that normal procedure at prisons? It seems inhumane. There is much to worry about regarding the health and safety of our women. I fear they have gone from the frying pan into the fire. When someone goes to prison, they do lose some rights, BUT NOT THEIR RIGHTS AS HUMAN BEINGS. The treatment our women are subjected to is unconscionable and inhumane. No person of conscience should support this abuse and the public should certainly not be paying for it.