

# Swollen

Before coming to prison I had never broken a bone or undergone surgery. Since then I've had two and I'm in the process of getting my third and possibly a fourth.

The first was for a hernia. It was fairly small and close to my belly-button. They took me to a local hospital for the surgery and had me back at the prison two hours after I came to. The current issue is for bad shoulders, which as brought me to the medical center in Springfield, Missouri. (see "Abduction"). The second surgery, and the topic of this story, was performed on a very sensitive part of my body. - My testicles.

They tell me that my problem was common, a blockage in the tube that attaches to the back of the testicle. This caused what I thought was a possible tumor and gave me great concern. I started the process like all medical problems start in prison. Sick call.

Since I was not technically sick they scheduled me for an appointment to see my assigned Physican's Assistent. (They use PA's throughout the Bureau of Prisons instead of doctors). My PA was a woman from the Phillipines. It took several months to finally get seen.

Once I was in her examination room I explained my problem. Her response was the same as she always uses: "Drink more water and get more exercise!" Her being from the Phillipines it came out sounding like: "Drank mo wah-tah, geet mah ex-size!" Her accent was very thick.

I asked her if she could perform an examination, but being where the problem was she said she couldn't, she would reschedule me to see the male PA on staff or the one doctor assigned to that prison.

Months went by before I was back in medical to see the doctor. After he did the physical exam he was concerned enough to order an ultra-sound.

Now unless you've been in the federal prison system or know someone who has, you would never know how long each step in this process takes. Tests get ordered, then referred, then to a committee of some sort. It gets approved or denied. Sometimes it gets deferred back for more information.

In my case the ultra-sound was approved and sent for scheduling. The facility doesn't have the ultrasound equipment on-site so I was taken to the hospital where several guards watched as a technician performed the ultra-sound on my left testicle. The technician said he couldn't tell me what was wrong, but in his experience he did not think it was cancer, so I was instantly relieved. At the time the lump was large, but not so big that the doctor was concerned.

Fast forward a year. The lump was getting bigger, at least it felt like it, and I was pushing medical to do something. I was finally able to get a second ultra-sound to compare to the first. It confirmed that the lump had increased in size, however the doctor at the prison didn't want to do anything. He said it wasn't "life threatening" or a "fertility issue" so he considered it cosmetic. Really?

So I had to start the process of filing a grievance. I wrote in the complaint that the lump was so large it was causing pain and discomfort, which it was. That sort of got their attention, so they started the approval process all over again. And after several weeks I was approved to see a urologist.

The urologist confirmed that the lump wasn't cancer. He told me that I had some long-worded issue that he could fix through surgery. I could explain all the gory details but it'll just make you cringe, so I'll leave it at having to open me up -down there- and fixing the issue.

The process is the same all over again, so it took weeks to get the surgery approved and eventually get scheduled. By the time they took me to have the surgery it had been almost two years since I started the process.

The surgery goes fine and I'm released in record time. They do not like prisoners being anywhere but in prison, no matter what the circumstances. They put me back on the compound the same day. They don't give me much in the way of pain meds, but I was able to manage.

I'm supposed to be scheduled to see someone for a follow-up in 7 to 10 days. Since it's an area that's "private" they have to schedule me to see a male staff member. Of course private only works one way when they want to use it. If they want to search they can strip us down and make us spread our cheeks, but that's a whole different story for a different time.

Day after day goes by without me being called down for the follow-up. I'm doing self-examinations, but I only know to look for severe redness or discharge. Basic stuff when looking for infection, which I surely do not want.

After several more days and the fact that I have noticed some goo coming from the area around the stitches I went to the Health Services Administrator voicing my concerns. She didn't want to talk to me, telling me they'd get to me when they get to me.

That just wasn't acceptable. I followed the chain of command up to the next level, which was the Associate Warden of Programs (most institutions have two AW positions).

Luckily the position was currently being held by a man, so he understood the urgency of the issue. He called medical and told them to do the follow-up that day, it was already a week overdue.

There still was no male staff member that could do the exam, so my PA takes me into her examination room, shuts the door and starts to give me very explicit instructions. She says: "O kay, I wan you to pull down yur pans, but not yur boxer." I do as she asks. - Then she says: "O kay, now lay on the table." I get on the table with my pants around my ankles. She says to me: "O kay, now show me yur testicle, but no wee-wee." It was hard not to laugh, but I kept my composure. I lift the boxer leg over my swollen testicles, exposing the long incision and stitches, leaving the rest on my anatomy covered.

She wearing glasses, has her glasses perched on the end of her nose and now has her face 4 or 5 inches from my balls. She is so close that I can feel her breath on my skin as she is speaking.

She's pulling on the skin, looking closely at the incision and stitches, all the while saying things like "okay" and "looks good". She is still very close when she says: "I doan see any problem, but they so beague!" And without even thinking about it my mouth opened and the words "Thank you" were said.

Oops!