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## A STUDY ON THE FOOD SYSTEM OF PRISON INMATES IN SRI LANKA

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### ABSTRACT

Prison inmates are also human beings who have all fundamental needs. But due to the punishment, there are some restrictions of fulfilling the needs. Prisoners do not have the freedom to decide what or how much they want to eat, nor are they able to choose when they eat for the majority of their meals. This study was based on the food system of prison inmates in Sri Lanka. The study was limited to convicted male inmates in “Closed prisons”, which held normally under maximum security conditions. Served foods for convicted male inmates were observed in Welikada, Bogambara and Mahara prisons. Information regarding the meal time, serving and special meal related data was collected from 15 senior jailors through in-depth interviews. Data were analysed using qualitative methodologies. Prisoners were provided a no-choice menu. Meals were prepared by prisoners under the supervision of correctional staff. Prepared food was transported in bulk via insulated trolleys to life sentenced prisoner accommodation areas and portioned under supervision. Other convicted prisoners had to come along a “dining line” (*bath pōlima*) with an aluminum bucket, from the cell to the place where the food were arranged. It shall be the duty of the medical officer to keep under close observation every prisoner whose health is or is likely to be injuriously affected by any inability of failure to take food or sufficient food, and to subject every such prisoner to any medical treatment that may be necessary at the earliest possible stage after his condition is discovered. All are allowed to fulfill their rituals related to the food and same foods were deserved in different times. This study shows prisoner’s food intake does not contain the neutrinos of an average person. As they do not have exercises (except half an hour walking) food intakes should be changed. Providing a black tea with the meal is, distorting the nutritional aims of the menu. It leads to anemia of the prisoners while significant energy and nutrients were being provided. Food budgets are very low, and consistently found that this is a major barrier to improving food in prisons. Delivering particular nutrients in menus with budgetary limitations, constraints more can still be done to provide variety, improve food hygiene, and prevent bullying and contamination.

**Keywords:** Closed prisons, Dinning line, Food intake, Hygiene, Prison inmates