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Self-Mutilation at the  
Penitentiary and Powhatan: Supplement

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## Introduction

Report #7821, "Self-Mutilation at the Penitentiary and Powhatan", was completed during September 1978, and covered all self-mutilation incidents which occurred at the Penitentiary and Powhatan from July 1, 1977 through June, 1978 (fiscal year 1978). Since this is such an important problem, it was deemed necessary to include as much recent information as possible. Thus, the purpose of this supplemental report is to include for consideration the incidents which occurred during July and August of 1978.

We have confined ourselves in this supplement to self-mutilation at the Penitentiary only. These 25 incidents represent 81% of all the incidents which occurred in the system during July and August. By combining these with the figures of the previous report, we are examining about 83% of all self-mutilation incidents which occurred in Virginia between July 1977 and August 1978.

The tables and narrative in this supplement correspond to those of the original report. Not all of the material in that report is included here, however, and some of the material is presented in summary form.

We wish to thank Assistant Superintendent Hardy for his continued cooperation.

## Self-Mutilation Incidents, July 1977 - August 1978

There was a total of 16 self-mutilation incidents in Virginia prisons in July, and 15 in August, bringing the total for the 14-month period under consideration to 149. Due to discrepancies noted in the original report, this supplement includes a total of 130 incidents when both the Penitentiary and Powhatan are being considered

and 118 incidents when just the Penitentiary is being discussed.

The 25 incidents which occurred at the Penitentiary during July and August involved 13 individuals, only four of whom had never previously injured themselves. Thus, the 130 incidents under consideration here involved 51 individuals, an average of 2.5 incidents per inmate.

Two inmates who had injured themselves once during FY 1978 did so again in July or August. Of the four new inmates involved in July and August, three injured themselves only once during those months. Thus, there was a total of 21 inmates who injured themselves more than once during the 14-month period. These 21 multiple self-mutilators accounted for 77% of the total self-mutilation incidents under consideration.

Table A shows the revision of Table 1 in the original report. Comparing the two tables shows the increase in multiple mutilations. The inmate who had cut himself 8 times during FY 1978 cut himself 6 more times in July and August, totaling 14 incidents in as many months. The inmate who had cut himself 11 times in FY 1978 cut himself two more times in July and August, totaling 13 times in 14 months. These two inmates, by themselves, accounted for 18% of all incidents during FY 1978. For the 14-month period through August, 1978, these two inmates account for about 21% of all incidents.

We must now also revise our figures and note that within the 14-month period, 59% of the inmates who cut themselves once will not do it again, while 76% of the inmates who injure themselves twice will also injure themselves a third, fourth or fifth time.

TABLE A  
Self-Mutilation Incidents:  
July 1977 - August 1978

<u>NO. OF INCIDENTS</u>	<u>NO. OF INMATES</u>	<u>CUMULATIVE % OF INCIDENTS</u>
1	30	23%
2	5	31%
3	4	40%
4	4	52%
5	2	60%
6	3	74%
7	1	79%
13	1	89%
14	1	100%
	<u>51</u>	

Figure A is the equivalent of Figure 1 in the original report, with July and August, 1978 now included. Note that July does not follow the pattern described in the original report; that is, there were 13 incidents and 10 inmates. This is a higher number of inmates than had been previously involved in any month, even those in which the number of incidents exceeded 13 (September, 1977 and June, 1978).

Tables B and C are the equivalents of Tables 2 and 3 in the original report. The "No. of occurrences" columns in Tables B and C is equivalent to the "Row Totals" columns in Tables 1 and 2. As would be expected, the number of occurrences of multiple self-injuries in the same month is increased greatly with the addition of July and August incidents. The number of occurrences of two and three incidents in the same month is 11 and 9 respectively, while an additional occurrence of the same inmate cutting himself three times during the same month has also been added.

Similarly, Table C shows three additional occurrences of an inmate cutting himself twice on the same (or consecutive) day.

#### Characteristics of Self-Mutilation Incidents

Table D presents the update of Table 4 in the original report. All of the 25 July and August incidents were cuttings; 16 of these involved cuts to the arms, 6 involved cuts to the wrists, one involved a cut to the hand and two involved cuts to the neck or face. Thus, 87% of all incidents which occurred in the 14-month period involved cuts.

Similarly, Table E shows the type of instrument used. As before, most (17) of the July - August incidents involved razor blades, two involved broken glass, and another one used a plastic knife. For

FIGURE A

MONTHLY FREQUENCIES OF SELF-MUTILATIONS  
AND NUMBER OF INMATES INVOLVED

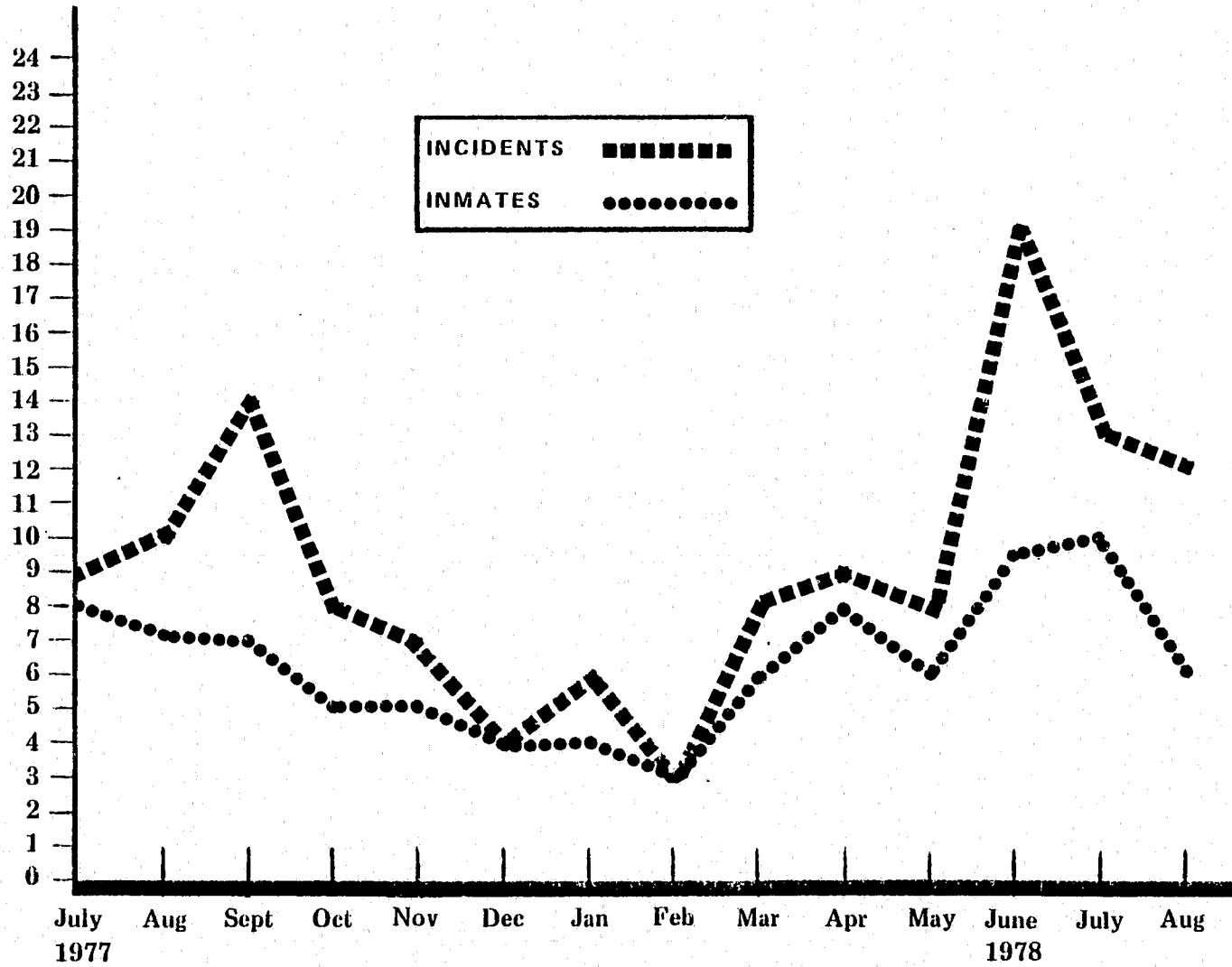


TABLE B  
Frequency of Multiple  
Self-Injuries Within  
Same Month

<u>NO. OF INCIDENTS</u>	<u>NO. OF OCCURRENCES</u>
2	11
3	9
4	2
5	0
6	1

TABLE C  
Frequency of Multiple Self-Injuries  
on Same or Consecutive Days

<u>NO. OF INCIDENTS</u>	<u>NO. OF OCCURRENCES</u>
2	14
3	1
4	0



the 14-month period, 52% of all incidents involved the use of a razor blade.

Table F shows the treatment location. Only 8 of the 25 July - August incidents were treated at MCV; this increases the overall MCV percentage slightly to 24%.

Table G shows that an even higher percentage of incidents occurred in segregation (69%). Of the 25 added incidents, 22 occurred in segregation, one in the hospital, and two in "B" building.

Table H shows the update of Table 8 in the original report. The 25 incidents occurred throughout the day in virtually the exact proportions as had the previous 105 incidents.

#### Selected Characteristics of Self-Mutilators

Since the July - August incidents involved only four new individuals, the findings of this section would not be expected to change much, and indeed, they do not.

Race. Of the four new inmates involved in self-mutilation incidents in July and August, three were white, one was black. This alters the percentages in Table 9 only slightly to 71% white and 27% black for the self-mutilator group.

Offense. One of the four new inmates was committed for burglary, one for assault, one for larceny, and one (a misdemeanor) for property damage. This results in a 2% increase in the assault category; the other categories in Table 10 were changed by only one percentage point.

Sentence Length. The new inmates were serving sentences of 30 years, 8 years, 3 years, and 24 months (misdemeanant). Excluding this latter inmate, this changes the mean sentence length reported in Table 11 to 21.7 years.

TABLE D  
Type of Injury (Penitentiary Only)

<u>Type</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Cut arm(s)	70	59%
Cut wrist(s)	15	13%
Cut hand(s)	3	2%
Cut neck/face	6	5%
Cut leg(s)	4	3%
Cut foot	1	1%
Cut (unspecified)	5	4%
Total cuttings	104	84%
Opened stitches from prior injury	3	2%
Imbedded foreign object in body	6	5%
Banged head	1	1%
Unknown	4	3%
TOTAL	118	

TABLE E  
Type of Instrument to Inflict  
Cuts (Penitentiary Only)

<u>INSTRUMENT</u>	<u>NO.</u>	<u>%</u>
Razor Blade	54	52%
Metal from shirt snap	5	5%
Chipped paint from wall	3	3%
Wire	2	2%
Broken window glass	4	4%
Broken light bulb	1	1%
Plastic knife	2	2%
Other	1	1%
Unknown	32	31%
TOTAL	104	

TABLE F  
Treatment Location  
(Penitentiary Only)

<u>Location</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Pen Hospital	89	75%
MCV	28	24%
Cell	1	1%
	<u>118</u>	

TABLE G  
Location at Time of  
Incident (Penitentiary Only)

<u>Location</u>	<u>NO.</u>	<u>%</u>
"A" building	5	4%
"B" building	10	8%
"C" building (segregation)	81	69%
Hospital	10	8%
Unknown	12	10%
	<u>118</u>	

TABLE H  
Time of Day of Incident

<u>TIME</u>	<u>NO.</u>	<u>%</u>
8 A.M. - 4 P.M.	30	23%
4 P.M. - Midnight	86	66%
Midnight - 8 A.M.	14	11%

Age. Three of the new self-mutilators were 18, 23, and 24 years old. Data was not available for the fourth. This changes the age range reported in Table 12 to 18-50 years, and the mean age to 30.0 years.

Similarly, the ages at commitment for these three inmates were 17, 19, and 23 years. This changes the mean age reported in the first column of Table 13 to 26.6 years.

#### Single vs. Multiple Self-Mutilators

As noted previously, two inmates who were classified as single self-mutilators would now have to be put into the multiple category. In addition, one of the new inmates would fall in the multiple category. Since these two groups were similar on three of the four variables, and since the makeup of the groups would change only slightly, this information has not been retabulated.

#### Summary and Conclusions

There was a total of 13 self-mutilation incidents at the Penitentiary in July 1978 and 12 in August 1978. Although these represent decreases from the high of 18 incidents for June of 1977, these figures are still quite high. For example, the July 1978 figure represents an increase of 60% over the July 1977 figure, while the August figure represents a 20% increase over last August. There have been 27% as many incidents as in FY 1978 in only 17% as much time. If this rate were to continue (and it almost definitely will not), there would be a total of 150 incidents at the Penitentiary for FY 1979, which would represent an increase of over 50% over FY 1978.

The additional self-mutilation incidents which occurred in July and August of 1978 do not change in any significant way the basic findings of the original report.

Other States

Four additional responses (from Arizona, Colorado, Maryland and Missouri) have been received since September 1. None of these states had completed any research. Missouri joins New Mexico and New Jersey as one of the states which takes disciplinary action against self-mutilators. Colorado reported the formation of an Inter-Agency Committee to explore the problems, and noted that they were in the process of writing a policy and procedure on suicide and para-suicide (self-mutilators). Finally the Colorado State Penitentiary (Maximum Security Division) and the Arizona State Prison reported rates of self-mutilation. Thus, the following may be added to Table 18 in the original report:

	<u>State Penitentiary Only</u>		
<u>State</u>	<u>NO. OF INCIDENTS</u>	<u>CONFINED POPULATION</u>	<u>INCIDENTS PER 100 INMATES</u>
Arizona	33	1,907 (1976)	1.7
Colorado (for 8 months only)	40	540 (1975)	7.4

**END**