Meds Downed in Lockup

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A lock-up in Gotham still ain't no picnic for PWAs, but thanks to procedures implemented by the NYPD this spring, it no longer means a forced drug holiday either.

The new policy, part of a settlement of a 1992 class action that challenged the overall lack of medical care in city jails, permits prisoners access to their prescription drugs while awaiting arraignment, but doesn't allow them to keep meds in their possession. The issue came to the fore last fall when several PWAs were arrested at a Matthew Shepard memorial march in Manhattan and forced to miss doses while in jail.

The settlement "balances inmates' medication needs with police concerns about security," said the suit's lead counsel, Susan Hendrix of New York's Legal Aid Society. The group argued that police showed "deliberate indifference to human life" by withholding treatment. "Now that police are starting to understand drug resistance and the importance of regular dosing, they are taking the issue seriously."

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