

VareseNews

Hospital for body packers opens. “This way, we can preserve their dignity”

Pubblicato: Sabato 11 Dicembre 2010

On the one hand, it is a **small well-equipped hospital, on the other, a little jail**, provided with technologies that guarantee the safety of the people held. “**Area S1**” has opened in Malpensa; it is a space where **body packers, carrying drugs in their bodies, who land at the airport** can be held. “This way, we can **guarantee the safety and dignity of the people concerned**,” explains the Interior Minister, **Roberto Maroni**, the chairman of the airport management company SEA, **Aldo Bonomi**, and the director of Gallarate Hospital, **Armando Gozzini**, together with many other authorities. Malpensa Airport now contains a branch of the hospital, with dedicated staff and state-of-the-art technology; it is a little hospital that coexists with an equally little prison of five cells.

The **phenomenon of the body packers**, men and woman who transport drugs inside plastic wrappers which they swallow, is on the increase: in 2007-2008 there were fewer than thirty of them, **in 2010, the number has already reached 77**. In the past, the individuals stopped **were escorted to Sant’Antonio Abate Hospital**, where they were kept until the ovules were expelled. “It took two policemen to check each body packer,” explains the Penitentiary Police, “resulting in more than 1500 work shifts every year. **It was an expensive approach, the disadvantage of which was that the people held and the policemen were together with the other patients**. For this reason, in anticipation of the growth that eventually occurred, SEA and the hospital decided on a definitive solution, investing €300,000.

The space, which will be managed by the Prison Police and by the Revenue Guard Corps, has been **established, discreetly, in Terminal 2’s Arrivals lounge**. Here, the body packers undergo x-rays (the results are sent, via Internet, to Gallarate’s Radiology Department), and are held in the cells. In many cases, these people are desperate, they put their own health at risk, for €1000-2000 per journey, or worse, they are **forced by the South American drug cartels**; for this reason, there is video surveillance, which enables the two policemen on duty to check each person at every moment, **in order to prevent any self-inflicted wounding, or worse, suicide attempts**. The conditions of health are also monitored, and here, too, the data is sent via Internet to Gallarate Hospital. **At the appropriate time, the ovules are ejected**, then cleaned and sterilised in a special facility. It is a step forward, which enables health visitors and policemen to avoid the worst part, recovering the ovules. This is the first system of its kind in Europe (there is something similar, albeit not as complete, only in Amsterdam), and it is avant-garde for Italy, too: **the rights and dignity of the people held are protected**, as are the working conditions of the health workers and policemen, certainly more so than in other Italian prisons.

Redazione VareseNews
redazione@varesenews.it

