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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Re: Mangham C. Harm reduction and illegal drugs: The real debate (Commentary). *CJPH* 2001;92(3):204-5.

I am writing to applaud the commentary by Dr. Mangham. It is imperative that harm reduction be viewed as a part of a comprehensive strategy for intervening in addiction-related problems, rather than an alternative. Although all people who have addictive disorders are not amenable to an abstinence-based recovery program at any given time, interventions need to be viewed on a continuum, where containment and amelioration of drug-related harms are appreciated as an early, necessary step, with ready availability of abstinence-based treatments, taking individual needs into account.¹ It is my sincere hope that public health activities will continue to focus on comprehensive education of all members of our society about harms resulting from drug use, abuse, and addictive behaviours, rather than legitimizing illicit drug use under the banner of harm reduction without proper research and utilization of evidence-based practice. Other articles in the same issue dealing with gambling and familiar influences on substance use highlight the impact of availability, modelling and social structures, that promote addictive behaviours.^{2,3}

Raju Hajela

Addictionist

Family, Community and Behavioural Medicine

Kingston, ON

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