

# LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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## Programs that make a difference

Dear editor,

Re: Harm Reduction Saves Lives

Substance use is a complex health issue. Everyone has the potential to develop an addiction, which is not a result of character flaws or moral shortcomings. The language we use when discussing addiction and related services can lead to stigma that prevents many people from seeking help.

Harm reduction is used to prevent or minimize negative effects of substance use. For opioid use, harm reduction in the form of Methadone and Suboxone prevents withdrawal symptoms. Without these symptoms, it becomes easier to stop using altogether and to focus on other aspects of life such as work and family. This type of harm reduction improves the physical health, mental health, social functioning, pregnancy outcomes, and overall quality of life of people addicted to opioids, and helps prevent potentially harmful drug-seeking behaviours. Methadone and Suboxone provided by community organizations are part of a larg-

er effort to manage the opioid crisis in Ontario. Timiskaming Health Unit's harm reduction program gives clients clean supplies, safe needle disposal kits and supports community sharps disposal bins across the district.

Harm reduction programs have consistently shown that they reduce blood-borne illnesses, other health issues and injuries. And, harm reduction programs reduce the financial burden on our health system.

Carefully choosing the way we talk about substance use disorders and related programs can help to prevent harmful stigma. People in our community who experience addiction should not be blamed but instead supported with evidence-based programs and services. We are fortunate and proud to have harm reduction in communities across Timiskaming, so that everyone in our communities has a chance to be healthy. Learn more at [timiskaminghu.com](http://timiskaminghu.com).

Sincerely,

Dr. Glenn Corneil

Acting Medical Officer of Health