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I am a physician who has been practicing in Maine for 20 years. I have been working in the field of treating substance use disorder for over 16 years. My experience has been real-life, hands on, not academic or speaking from behind a desk.

As I tell my patients and my med students, doctors are only allowed to have opinions when there is no evidence. If there is evidence, we need to follow it and act accordingly.

The evidence on harm reduction is robust, and clearly demonstrates that harm reduction interventions do NOT result in greater use of drugs or greater damage to communities. What harm reduction provides is fewer new cases of blood borne illness from needle exposure, fewer used needles out in the community posing a public health risk, and most importantly, fewer deaths by opioid poisoning. Harm reduction allows real people, who are loved by other real people, a chance to move forward and stay alive, even if they have made a mistake or are engaged in activity which may be unsafe. Everyone deserves a chance to wake up to a new day.