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Marsh 21, 2010

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Ministère de la Santé et des Sports
14, avenue Duquesne
75350

Madame la Ministre,

Re: Support for evaluation of a medically-supervised consumption site in Paris

As the president of the International AIDS Society and a principal investigator of the Scientific Evaluation of Supervised Injection in Vancouver, we are writing to express our strong support for an evaluation of a medically-supervised consumption facility in France.

Please find a report summarizing the peer-reviewed findings from the scientific evaluation of Insite, North America's first supervised injection facility (SIF), on our website at uhri.cfenet.ubc.ca/images/Documents/insite_rapport-fr.pdf. Our five year-long study identified a number of positive outcomes associated with Insite, including: a reduction in the level of risk behaviours for infection with HIV and hepatitis C; the prevention of approximately 50 drug-related deaths, following prompt medical attention to over 1000 on-site overdoses; and no adverse events, such as initiation into injection drug use. We also observed substantial positive impacts on drug use. For example, in the year after the facility opened, there was a statistically significant 32% increase in entry to detoxification among a randomly-recruited sample of SIF users. These clear benefits to the health of local drug users were not offset by damage to the local community; in fact, several measures of conditions in the community surrounding Insite improved and we found no evidence the facility served as a magnet for drug-related crime. Finally, two external cost-effectiveness studies have demonstrated the facility to save significantly taxpayer expenditures on healthcare.

In short, our scientific evaluation concluded the pilot SIF was an effective and appropriate intervention to reduce local levels of drug-related harm. Even in a setting with an advanced universal health-care system and longstanding commitment to substitution therapy, we found the SIF made several important contributions to public health.

Yours sincerely,

Julio S. G. Montaner, MD, FRCPC, FCCP
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