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Dear Colleagues,

As drug treatment and HIV/AIDS specialists, we write to express our concern over your memorandum, "Say No to Methadone Programs in the Russian Federation." Although widely published and distributed in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, the memorandum contains a number of misstatements of fact. Some of these are detailed in the pages attached.

Methadone is currently being administered to more than 750,000 patients in more than sixty countries, including all twenty-five members of the European Union. The medication has been proven to reduce illicit opiate injection and criminal activity, and to decrease HIV risk and increase adherence to HIV medication.

The errors in your memorandum are all the more alarming since methadone's effectiveness as an HIV prevention measure is of particular importance in Russia, where eighty-five percent of cumulative registered HIV cases were among injecting drug users. Failure to provide a lifesaving means of drug treatment will mean more HIV infections and lives lost.

As leading professionals in your field, your views carry enormous weight. We hope that you will issue a correction to "Say No to Methadone Programs in the Russian Federation" that might be disseminated as widely as the original memorandum. More broadly, we sincerely hope that Russian substance abuse treatment specialists have an opportunity to review the extensive scientific evidence supporting the safety and efficacy of substitution treatment in addressing opiate addiction and preventing the spread of HIV.

Sincerely,

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