

## INTRODUCTION

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## Harm reduction and its influence on the health of society and the family

The medicine of the twenty-first century has been changing at an unprecedented scale and opening to new perspectives. One of them is the development of the harm reduction strategy, which is a set of public health policies aiming at reducing the negative social consequences associated with risky or dangerous activities and behaviour. The idea of harm reduction, understood as the minimisation of the negative influence of a harmful agent on an individual by replacing it with another agent with a lower health risk originated from the positively rated and effective way of controlling opioid addiction dating back to the sixties of the twentieth century. Since the nineties, harm reduction has been considered to be one of the most important directions in the contemporary addiction therapy. Currently, it covers all aspects of everyday life which are of key importance from the public health point of view, and, consequently, that of the whole family and an individual.

Currently, one of the most widely discussed problems in this area is the potential strength of harm reduction in tobacco addiction due to the high prevalence of this phenomenon as well as the significant level of negative health and social consequences. However, harm reduction is justified in many other areas as well. These include poor eating habits (e.g. activities to reduce the consumption of animal fat, sugar and salt), the risks associated with transport (minimisation of the negative consequences of accidents through the use of seatbelts, airbags, road barriers, among others), risky physical activity (reduction of the risk of permanent injuries through the use of protective gear such as ski helmets and goggles, appropriate sports footwear etc.), occupational hazards (harm reduction by the use of protective equipment and compliance with health and safety standards) as well as risks present in the immediate home environment.

In the new section of “*Medycyna Rodzinna*”: “Harm Reduction: Health – Society – Family”, which will feature regularly in the journal, we wish to draw the readers’ attention to the challenges and proposed solutions for problems associated with harm reduction, based on the contemporary scientific knowledge and professional literature.

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