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**Harm Reduction Psychotherapy: A promising approach to Addiction Treatment**

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With increasing rates of substance misuse disorders, there has been a rise of interest in non-traditional psychological routes of treatment. Addiction has been identified as a chronic illness, the effects of which run across generations, making it one of the most challenging mental health problems to treat, often with poor therapeutic outcomes and high rates of relapse (Monti et al., 1999). Harm Reduction strategies arise from this very assumption that most people will continue to use substances despite receiving help from an array of services, thus making abstinence a somewhat unattainable goal (Collins et al., 2015), and instead focuses primarily on valuable incremental changes that can minimize the potential for harm (Tatarsky, 2003). Traditional macro-level harm reduction strategies target associated risk factors (sexual risks, sharing of needles/ HIV, driving accidents, social pressure, pain management) as they can perpetuate substance misuse outside the walls of the therapy room. From a psychotherapy perspective however, Harm Reduction essentially involves intervening at the pre-action stage, by assessing risk of harm, aligning therapeutic practices to meet the client where they are and decreases resistance by addressing ambivalence towards change (Miller & Rollnick, 2012). Harm reduction as a starting point in therapy, has previously been associated with enhancement of client's self-

efficacy and motivation to bring about further positive changes, as well as a subsequent increase with engagement in long-term psychotherapy (Denning & Little, 2011). Harm reduction therapy also promises to be an advantageous method of intervention, especially due to the ease with which it can be integrated within primary care settings as well as emergency medical services. This presentation will address emerging empirical evidence about Harm Reduction Psychotherapy, its clinical practice and discuss its wider implications for the treatment of addiction.

**Speaker Biography**

Kareen E Bekhazi is Head of Novomed Psychiatry & Neurology's Psychology Department and holds a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology from California Southern University. She has completed extensive training in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) from the Beck Institute in the USA, with a focus on depression, anxiety, bipolar disorders and personality disorders. She is also trained in newer modalities such as dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) and acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT). She has many professional interests and treats a variety of mental disorders. She is highly experienced in treating substance abuse and addictions with integrative harm therapy. This experience includes working with the UN Office of Drugs and Crimes as a delegate to train other mental health professionals to deliver addiction treatment in the Mena region. She also specializes in treating couples using the acclaimed HEART approach. She firmly agrees with author and therapist David Richo's assertion that "our wounds are most often the openings into the best and most beautiful part of us".

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