

# Open Letter to Global Health and Policy Agencies: Addressing the Closure of Aggressive Opioid Treatment Clinics

To distinguished members of international health organizations, policy makers and researchers,

We want to bring to your attention an issue of pressing concern that has significant implications for public health and harm reduction strategies in our region: the recent closure of seven opioid agonist treatment (OAT) clinics.

The majority of these clinics primarily administer buprenorphine, a first-line pharmacotherapy necessary for the management of opioid use disorder. Discontinuing these facilities not only disrupts ongoing treatments but jeopardizes health outcomes for a significant cohort of patients.

Among the affected facilities is a methadone clinic, recognized by the community for its evidence-based practices and favorable treatment outcomes.

Does its uniqueness extend beyond its clinical performance? The clinic is housed in a permanent infrastructure located within a park, distinguishing it from other OAT centers that operate from temporary structures within hospital yards, without direct medical supervision or association with the hospitals

The building of the aforementioned methadone clinic belongs to the military complex. It is worth noting that for over a decade, this structure was generously granted without financial obligations. However, recent mandates require a modest rental fee, which has contributed to its current operational challenges.

The clients offered to pay the rent themselves, together with the denial came more intense movements for the closure

The closure of these clinics, especially under these circumstances, raises critical questions:

- With what scientific data do they close it?
- How scattered will they distribute the services throughout Athens?
- Will service users find the safety and understanding they had in this unit?

Clinical Implications: Abrupt change in OAT can lead to severe psychological problems, increased risk of relapse and potential overdose incidents.

Public health concerns: OAT centers serve as key points of contact for harm reduction, preventing the spread of infectious diseases such as HIV and hepatitis C.

Economic impact: The long-term economic impact of untreated opioid use disorders, including health care costs and lost productivity, is significant.

We call on international agencies to recognize the seriousness of this situation and extend expertise, guidance, and potential support to ensure that evidence-based treatments remain accessible to those in need. Closing these clinics not only represents a setback in opioid management, but also jeopardizes the broader goals of public health and community well-being.

We look forward to collective discussions and proactive interventions to address this emerging challenge.

Sincerely,

**The Greek Peer Network of Users of Psychoactive Substances (PeerNUPS)**

**The European Network of People who Use Drugs (EuroNPUD)**