

Letter to Editor – Sudbury Star – June 2013

I have been a surgeon in this community for over a quarter of a century. I have seen and operated on many terrible cases. Sometimes I was able to help the unfortunate person; others, there was nothing I could do.

There is a terrible chronic disease that unfortunately often devours the patient. The circle of friends and family of the victim are profoundly affected by the sense of haplessness. Sometimes death comes as a relief for the unfortunate soul tormented by the pain. The sudden death, often violent, devastates those who love and care for the poor patient leaving indelible psychological marks on mothers, fathers, husbands or wives, and on the children. Unlike with other diseases the family also sometimes bears a sentiment of guilt and a stigma of shame.

I am not speaking about leprosy or HIV. I am talking about gambling, a disease that can be more virulent than the most aggressive cancer imaginable. Those who are able to control that disease wage a daily battle against relapse.

I remember the funeral of a young man, whose family we knew well. He died by hanging himself. I can only imagine the desperation and hopelessness that made suicide irresistible. And those terrible last few moments of his life alone.

We each took turns to say a few words about him at the funeral, about what he meant to each of us. It was a last gift we brought to him to take with him for eternity.

His mother was the last to give her gift. She knelt by her child's body and gently stroked his icy cold face. And she began to sing a sweet song. It was a cradle song.

When Ms. Lougheed Yawney informed me that at the Mayor's luncheon she learned the city was already entertaining proposals from developers, I felt revulsed by the crass callousness of those who made the decision to invite that disease to our region.

Dr. Jacques Abourbih Sudbury