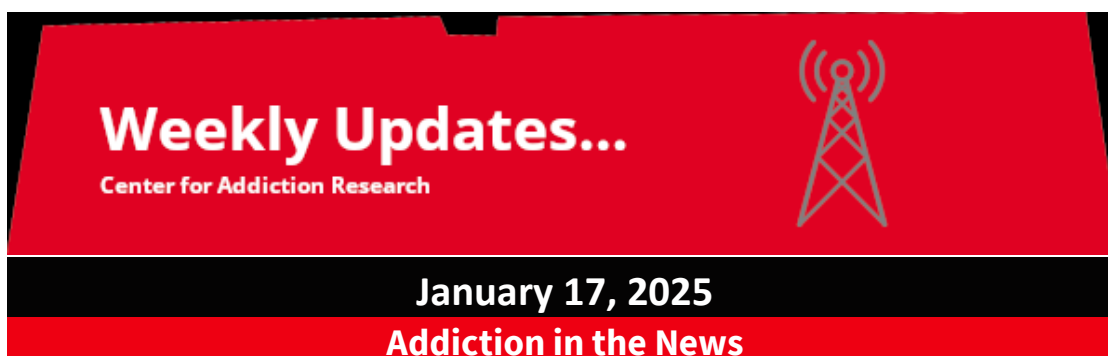


Welcome to the weekly newsletter from the Center for Addiction Research! Each newsletter includes highlights from addiction in the news topics, active funding opportunities offered by NIDA/NIAAA, and information about any new publications from CAR members. Please email Jen Rowe ([roweji@ucmail.uc.edu](mailto:roweji@ucmail.uc.edu)) to change your communication preferences. Thank you.

Thank you for your interest in the Center for Addiction Research - our mission is to accelerate scientific progress in the prevention and treatment of substance use disorders and their consequences by fostering research collaborations across: 1) UC departments, colleges, and centers including Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center; 2) Local, regional, and state community and governmental partners; and 3) Other academic institutions and industry."



## **UC/ Regional News**

### **Tips to reduce alcohol use**

The University of Cincinnati's Chris Tuell was featured in a Fox News article discussing tips on how to reduce alcohol use following the recent Surgeon General's advisory about alcohol use and cancer risk. The advisory notes that alcohol can increase the risk of throat, liver, esophageal, mouth, larynx, colon and rectal cancers, making it the "third leading preventable cause of cancer" in the U.S. For people looking to reduce severe alcohol consumption, Tuell said the first steps include analyzing your current level of alcohol dependence and speaking with a primary care physician before discontinuing years of heavy alcohol use. Alcohol detoxification can sometimes require hospitalization to manage withdrawal...

## **NIH HEAL Initiative HEALing Communities Study (HCS) Webinar:**

### **Tips for Engaging Coalitions to Respond to the Opioid Crisis Learned from the HEALing Communities Study**

**February 4, 2024, 1:00 PM – 2:30 PM ET**

Coalitions are a key resource for expanding the implementation of evidence-based practices to reduce opioid overdose trends. Join researchers and partners from four states to gain valuable insights into how community coalitions were organized and how their structure influenced coalition effectiveness in addressing the opioid crisis. Building on experiences of the HCS, this webinar will cover the role of coalition charters, capacity building, and the impact of the Communities That HEAL (CTH) intervention – a community-driven approach designed to reduce opioid overdoses

by strengthening local coalitions and implementing evidence-based strategies related to opioid education and naloxone distribution, medication treatment for opioid use disorder, and safer opioid prescribing and dispensing. **(Dr. T. John Winhusen, HEALing Communities Study Co-Principal Investigator for Ohio and CAR Director)**

Speakers:

- Dr. Bridget Freisthler, Cooper-Herron Endowed Professor in Mental Health, University of Tennessee
- Dr. Pam Salsberry, Professor Emeritus, The Ohio State University, College of Public Health
- Dr. Linda Sprague Martinez, Professor and Director, University of Connecticut, Health Disparities Institute
- Dr. Emily Nelson, Research Associate, Case Western Reserve University, School of Medicine
- Dr. Darcy Freedman, Swetland Professor of Environmental Health Sciences, Case Western Reserve University, School of Medicine
- Carol Baden, Community Health Advisor, The Office of Governor DeWine, Recovery Ohio
- Dr. Whitney Darnell, Associate Professor, Northern Kentucky University, School of Media and Communication

## **National News**

### **New Resources Highlighting Evidence-based Interventions to Prevent and Treat Alcohol Among Native Communities**

NativeAIR (Native Communities—Alcohol Intervention Review) is a new user-friendly website that provides information on evidence-based interventions and strategies to help prevent and treat alcohol use disorder among American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) and other Indigenous communities. The website is designed to help Tribal and community leaders, educators, health professionals, and others identify and filter through a menu of interventions that may be most appropriate for their community's needs. NativeAIR includes nearly 40 evidence-based alcohol-related interventions focusing on topics ranging...

### **Experts advocate for social context in alcohol research methods**

A recent editorial calls for a significant change in how laboratory alcohol studies are conducted. Published in the journal *Addiction*, the editorial emphasizes the urgent need for experimental research that incorporates social drinking contexts to more accurately reflect typical alcohol consumption and better understand the development of alcohol use disorders (AUD). "Drinking is inherently a social activity for most people," said Kasey G. Creswell, associate professor of psychology at Dietrich College. "By studying alcohol's effects in isolation, we're missing crucial insights into how alcohol affects social interactions, as..."

### **Even one drink a day elevates your cancer risk—an expert breaks down a new government report**

Many people use the new year to reflect on their relationship with alcohol. Just-released government guidelines are giving Americans another reason to consider a "dry January." Over the past few decades, mounting scientific evidence has shown that as little as 1–2 alcoholic drinks per day can lead to increases in the likelihood of several cancers. This prompted the U.S. surgeon general, Dr. Vivek Murthy, to release a new Surgeon General Advisory on Jan. 3, 2025, warning about the link between alcohol and cancer. This report highlighted the evidence and included a call for new cancer warning labels on alcoholic...

### **Drinking alcohol is linked to health risks, says report**

A new federal report warns that drinking alcohol could raise your risk of dying early. The draft of the report released Tuesday by the Department of Health and Human Services states that "in the United States, males and females have a 1 in 1000 risk of dying from alcohol use if they consume more than 7 drinks per week. This risk increases to 1 in 100 if they consume more than 9 drinks per week." The purpose of the report was to generate evidence on weekly alcohol consumption thresholds to minimize health risks. While the draft summarizes the findings of its research, the report does not include specific recommendations on...

### **Despite strict laws, Texas is awash in intoxicating cannabis**

If you want to get high in Texas, your options are almost limitless. This law-and-order state of guns, God and capital punishment is awash in cannabis. Today, Texas has more than 7,000 cannabis dispensaries, almost twice as many as California. Add to that: 24-hour cannabis delivery, mobile pot trucks, cannabis vending machines, and mail-order cannabis. "Texas has become known as the biggest open recreational market in the country. 'Open' meaning no regulations," says Nico Richardson, CEO of Texas Originals, which sells only medical marijuana. It's confusing because recreational marijuana is still illegal in Texas. The...

### **Financial rewards significantly increase smoking cessation rates, even in pregnancy**

Rewards and financial incentives are successful methods to help people quit smoking, according to a new Cochrane review co-led by a University of Massachusetts Amherst public health and health policy researcher. For the first time, the researchers also found "high-certainty evidence" that this intervention works for pregnant people as well. A previous review of studies, also published in the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, found moderate certainty that financial rewards played a role in encouraging the pregnant population to quit smoking. "When we updated this review, we found more studies of...

### **FDA proposes landmark nicotine limit in cigarettes and certain other combustible tobacco products**

WASHINGTON, DC, January 15, 2025 — The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) today announced a proposed rule that would for the first time require the tobacco industry to lower nicotine levels in cigarettes, which have addicted and killed millions of people over decades, to minimally- or non-addictive levels. Nancy Brown, CEO of the American Heart Association, the world's leading voluntary organization focused on heart and brain health, issued the following statement: "By reducing nicotine levels in cigarettes and certain other combustible tobacco products, the FDA would take a major step to protect public health from an...

### **US judge blocks FDA graphic warning label requirement for cigarettes**

Jan 14 (Reuters) - A federal judge in Texas has blocked the U.S. Food and Drug Administration from enforcing a looming requirement that cigarette packages and advertisements contain graphic warnings illustrating the health risks of smoking. U.S. District Judge J. Campbell Barker in Tyler, Texas, on Monday sided with, opens new tab R.J. Reynolds and other tobacco companies in finding the FDA went beyond its authority by requiring packaging and advertising to contain 11 specific warnings. He said those warnings go above and beyond the nine that Congress specified when in 2009 it passed the Tobacco Control Act, which gave...

### **Bans on tobacco advertising and sponsorship linked to 20% lower odds of smoking**

Implementing bans on the advertising, promotion, and sponsorship of tobacco products is linked to 20% lower odds of smoking, and 37% lower risk of taking up the habit, reveals a pooled data analysis of the available research, published online in Tobacco Control. The findings indicate that these bans do influence behavior, lending further weight to calls for their wider international implementation and enforcement, conclude the researchers. In 2019 alone, more than a billion people around the globe regularly smoked tobacco, and smoking caused nearly 8 million deaths, note the researchers. To curb the toll taken by smoking...

### **Getting Lung Cancer Screening Staff Involved Improved Tobacco Cessation**

Integrating smoking cessation into a lung cancer screening program had the biggest benefit for patients who wanted to quit, a randomized trial showed. Self-reported tobacco abstinence was greater at both 3 and 6 months with higher levels of integration of smoking cessation assistance in the lung cancer screening program, reported Paul Cinciripini, PhD, of the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, and colleagues in JAMA Internal Medicine. Patients who received 12-week nicotine replacement therapy or prescription pharmacotherapy and counseling by tobacco treatment specialists within...

### **Innovative partnership helps low-income tobacco users quit**

A partnership between Kick It California, a tobacco quitline operated by University of California San Diego, and local 211 information and referral agencies resulted in more than 55,000 new referrals for tobacco cessation services between 2021 and 2023, report researchers at the UC San Diego Herbert Wertheim School of Public Health and Human Longevity Science and UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center. The results, published in *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*, demonstrate how quitlines and 211 agencies can collaborate effectively to help address socioeconomic disparities in tobacco use. "We already knew that 211...

### **3 in 10 US adults aware of menthol-mimicking cigarettes**

A substantial proportion of U.S. adults are aware of and have already experimented with synthetic cooling agent menthol-mimicking cigarettes, according to a study published online Jan. 14 in *JAMA Network Open*. Kelvin Choi, Ph.D., from the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities in Bethesda, Maryland, and colleagues examined the epidemiology of the use of synthetic cooling agent menthol-mimicking cigarettes among U.S. adults. The analysis included a nationally representative survey sample of 3,200 U.S. adults (aged 21 years and older). The researchers found that 29.1% of U.S. adults were aware of...

### **US soldiers' nicotine pouch use 10 times higher than civilians**

American soldiers are 10 times more likely to use nicotine pouches that can cause serious health issues than average American adults, according to a survey of military personnel at Fort Liberty, the largest American military base. Conducted by researchers at UVA Cancer Center, the Fort Liberty Department of Public Health and the UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center, the study analyzed anonymous responses from 1,957 soldiers surveyed in 2022 and 2023. Among survey participants, 23.8% reported using nicotine pouches in the previous 30 days, compared with a 2022 study that found just 2.9 percent of all American...

### **Study highlights effective communication strategies to support health warning labels on little cigars and cigarillos**

A qualitative study published in *BMC Public Health*, conducted by lead author Chineme Enyioha, MD, MPH, and colleagues, aimed to design effective communication strategies to support health warning labels (HWLs) on little cigars and cigarillos (LCCs), a tobacco product increasingly popular among young adults, particularly within Black communities. With nearly 9 million adults in the U.S. consuming cigars, the rise in LCC usage occurs against a backdrop of declining cigarette consumption, necessitating targeted health communication efforts to mitigate the associated health risks, including various cancers. The study...

### **Smoke and mirrors: The myth of healthy vaping**

Vaping is often marketed as a healthier alternative to smoking or a tool to quit smoking. But it's not a safe habit—the health effects of vaping can be irreversible

and sometimes deadly. Because it's a relatively new technology, the long-term health consequences of vaping are still unknown, but research is revealing an increasing number of health risks, including permanent damage to your teeth and gums. When you vape, you inhale a combination of airborne chemicals including nicotine, flavorings, and other chemicals. David Okano, DDS, section head of periodontics at the University of Utah School of Dentistry, explains that...

### **Study finds changes in opioid use outcomes after passage of medical marijuana laws**

A new study at Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health found no changes in opioid outcomes among the general population with the states' passage of medical and recreational marijuana laws. However, the findings also show decreases in opioid outcomes after medical marijuana laws existed among people reporting cannabis use but no changes in opioid outcomes when laws for both medical and recreational use were enacted. The results are published in the International Journal of Drug Policy. By the end of 2019, 32 states had adopted medical marijuana laws (MCL) alone. All states that went on to adopt recreational...

### **DEA, HHS finalize rule allowing telehealth drug treatment**

The Biden administration has finalized a long-awaited rule laying out how some health care providers can prescribe gold-standard opioid use disorder treatments through telehealth. The final rule from the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration within the Department of Health and Human Services allows providers who have not had an in-person visit with a patient to prescribe six months' worth of buprenorphine through telehealth, including through audio-only visits. Afterward, to continue prescribing buprenorphine through telehealth, providers can conduct an...

### **U.S. Overdose Deaths Remain Higher Than in Other Countries — Trend-Tracking and Harm-Reduction Policies Could Help**

Provisional data show that drug overdoses in the United States claimed more than 100,000 lives for a third consecutive year in 2023 — a more than 50 percent jump since 2019. By a substantial margin, the U.S. has the highest rate of overdose deaths in the world, followed by Puerto Rico — a U.S. territory. And while Scotland and Canada, the second- and third-ranked countries, saw decreases from 2021 to 2022, rates in the U.S. have remained high. Our analysis, using the latest mortality data from 2022, compares the U.S. overdose rate — 324 deaths per 1 million people, or almost 108,000 deaths in 2022 — to dozens of countries...

### **Study examines links between opioid epidemic and rural homelessness**

A new study led by a Georgia State University researcher finds that the opioid epidemic and rural homelessness are exacerbating each other with devastating consequences. School of Public Health Assistant Professor April Ballard and her colleagues examined data from the Rural Opioid Initiative on more than 3,000

people who use drugs in eight rural areas across 10 states. They found that 54% of study participants reported experiencing homelessness in the past six months, a figure that suggests Point in Time Counts used to allocate state and federal funding significantly underestimate homeless populations in rural areas. The findings are...

### **Research highlights prevention efforts in fentanyl overdoses**

The overwhelming majority of those in New York City who obtained a naloxone kit to counteract opioid overdose had a high need for the drug, according to a study by Weill Cornell Medicine investigators and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. The study, published Jan. 16 in the Journal of Urban Health, found that 97% of people who received naloxone kits through various opioid overdose prevention programs were at high risk of overdosing or witnessing an overdose. But the authors noted fentanyl overdoses still disproportionately affect some racial and ethnic groups more than...

### **U.S. district judge in opioid proceedings slams pharmacy middlemen, says they're trying to stall**

The U.S. district judge in Cleveland, Ohio handling a galaxy of claims stemming from the prescription opioid epidemic on Monday reiterated his belief that powerful drug middlemen are trying to stall cases against them. One maneuver, he said, "borders on frivolous." That's not something lawyers want to hear from a judge in a case where \$41 billion in settlements have already been awarded — and billions of their clients' dollars are potentially at stake. More than a half-million Americans have died from opioid overdoses since 1999, and the lives of countless more have been shattered. Overprescription of opioids was a major cause...

### **APA applauds SAMHSA action to expand access to effective addiction treatment**

Washington — The American Psychological Association commends the Substance Use and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) for increasing the incentives to individuals who are battling substance use disorders under a highly effective treatment protocol known as contingency management. Contingency management is an evidence-based treatment for substance use disorders that has been proven through decades of research to reduce drug use. Roughly 50% of recent drug overdose deaths in the U.S. are associated with use of the stimulants cocaine and methamphetamine, and unlike for opioid use disorders, there...

### **Meth mortality skyrocketed between 1999 and 2021: Study reveals age and gender differences**

Methamphetamine deaths in the U.S. rose 61-fold from 1999 to 2021, according to a study, highlighting a growing crisis in addiction and public health. Looking at the gender breakdown of these deaths could improve harm-reduction efforts and outcomes for patients suffering from addiction, said Andrew Yockey, University of Mississippi assistant professor of public health and co-author of the study. "We

know that, across the board, men are more likely to use every substance except tranquilizers than women, and we found that to be true here," Yockey said. "Especially if we're thinking about methamphetamine, we know that..."

### **Virtual reality pilot program shows promise for preventing substance misuse and violence**

Health-risk behaviors such as binge drinking, drug use, and violence are common among college students. These issues are especially prevalent among first-year students living away from their families for the first time. According to the American Addiction Centers, nearly half of all college students would qualify for at least one substance use disorder. A pilot and feasibility study by Kenneth W. Griffin and colleagues found that using VR technology to prevent substance misuse and violence is both feasible and engaging; 100% of participants agreed that the program could be implemented on college campuses. "VR for reducing..."

### **UK government bans 'zombie drug' xylazine**

The UK government on Wednesday banned the flesh-rotting so-called zombie drug xylazine as it tries to tackle deaths from narcotics and crack down on criminal gangs. The high-strength animal sedative, also known as "tranq", often leaves long-term users in an unresponsive state and with non-healing skin lesions. It has increasingly been used in combination with opioids such as heroin, with traces found in cannabis vapes as well, according to the UK Home Office. The UK government in September announced plans to ban xylazine and 21 other dangerous substances, the legislation for which came into force...

## **Funding Opportunities**



## **GRANTS & FUNDING**

NIH Central Resource for Grants and Funding Information

[RFA-MH-26-105](#)

[Multimodal Artificial Intelligence to Accelerate HIV Clinical Care \(R01 Clinical Trial Optional\)](#)

[PAR-25-371](#)

[Ethical, Legal and Social Implications \(ELSI\) Research \(R01 Clinical Trial Optional\)](#)

[PAR-25-370](#)

[Ethical, Legal and Social Implications \(ELSI\) Small Research Grant \(R03 Clinical Trial Optional\)](#)

[PAR-25-369](#)

[Ethical, Legal and Social Implications \(ELSI\) Exploratory/Developmental Research Grant \(R21 Clinical Trial Optional\)](#)

## CAR Member New Publications

### **Jail-based interventions to reduce risk for opioid-related overdose deaths: Examples of implementation within Ohio counties participating in the HEALing Communities Study**

Sprunger, Joel; Brown, Jennifer; Rubi, Sofia; Papp, Joan; Lyons, Michael; Winhusen, T John

*Health & Justice*

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40352-024-00307-3>

#### **ABSTRACT**

**Background:** Opioid-related overdose is a leading cause of death for criminal legal-involved individuals and, although naloxone distribution and medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) are effective means for reducing post-release overdose death risk, jail-based availability is limited. This case report describes the challenges faced by three Ohio communities as they implemented evidence-based practices (EBPs) in jails to combat post-release opioid overdose deaths.

**Method:** We present case examples of how barriers were overcome to implement jail-based EBPs in three Ohio communities (two urban and one rural) as part of the HEALing Communities Study (UM1DA049417; ClinicalTrials.gov Identifier: NCT04111939). Of the 18 participating Ohio HEALing Communities Study counties, we highlight 3 communities for the novelty of their EBPs implemented, the challenges that they faced, and their rural/urban status. We present descriptive data regarding the EBPs that they implemented and discuss the challenges identified by HEALing Communities Study staff with first-hand experience facilitating their implementation.

**Results:** Newly implemented interventions included overdose education and direct provision of naloxone to incarcerated individuals upon release (2 of 3 communities), initiating MOUD prior to release (3 of 3), linkage to ongoing MOUD treatment in the community (2 of 3), peer support-facilitated treatment retention efforts (2 of 3) and emergency housing (1 of 3) in the immediate post-incarceration period. Common challenges that emerged included skepticism about the need and feasibility of implementing EBPs to reduce overdose and death, lack of knowledge about the options available and whether external agencies may assist, and difficulty engaging stakeholders to overcome inertia.

**Conclusions:** Creative flexibility, calm persistence, technical facilitation, and collaboration with community service providers were assets that helped these Ohio jails implement evidence-based strategies that combat the opioid epidemic and reduce the likelihood of post-incarceration overdose and death in a high risk, formerly incarcerated population.

# **Medications for opioid use disorder: Predictors of early discontinuation and reduction of overdose risk in US military veterans by medication type**

Corey J Hayes, Rebecca A Raciborski, Matthew Nowak, Mahip Acharya, Edward V Nunes Jr, T John Winhusen

*Addiction*

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/add.16659>

## **ABSTRACT**

**Aim:** This study: (1) estimated the effect of early discontinuation of medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD) on overdose probability and (2) measured the relationship between patient characteristics and early discontinuation probability for each MOUD type.

**Design, setting and participants:** This was a retrospective cohort using electronic health record data from the US Veterans Healthcare Administration. Participants were veterans initiating MOUD with buprenorphine (BUP), methadone (MET) or extended-release naltrexone (XR-NTX) from fiscal years 2012-19. A total of 39 284 veterans met eligibility with 22 721 (57.8%) initiating BUP, 12 652 (32.2%) initiating MET and 3911 (10.0%) initiating XR-NTX..

**Measurements:** Measurements (1) determined whether the veteran experienced an overdose in the 365 days after MOUD initiation (primary) and (2) early discontinuation of MOUD, defined as discontinuation before 180 days (secondary). We assumed that unobserved patient characteristics would jointly influence the probability of discontinuation and overdose. and estimated the joint distribution with a bivariate probit model.

**Findings:** We found that 9.0% of BUP initiators who experienced an overdose above the predicted 3.9% had no veteran-discontinued BUP early; findings for XR-NTX were similar, with 12.2% of initiators overdosing above the predicted 4.5%, but this was statistically inconclusive. We found no relationship between early discontinuation and overdose for MET initiators, probably due to the high risk of both events. The patient characteristics included in our post-estimation exploratory analysis of early discontinuation varied by MOUD type, with between 14 (XR-NTX) and 25 (BUP) tested. The only characteristics with at least one level showing a statistically significant change in probability of early discontinuation for all three MOUD types were geography and prior-year exposure to psychotherapy, although direction and magnitude varied.

**Conclusions:** Early discontinuation of buprenorphine, and probably extended-release naltrexone, appears to be associated with a greater probability of experiencing a fatal or non-fatal overdose among US veterans receiving medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD); methadone does not show the same association. There is no consistent set of characteristics among early discontinuers by MOUD type.

**Keywords:** Geographic disparities; medication treatment for opioid use disorder; opioid use disorder; overdose; racial disparities; veterans.

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