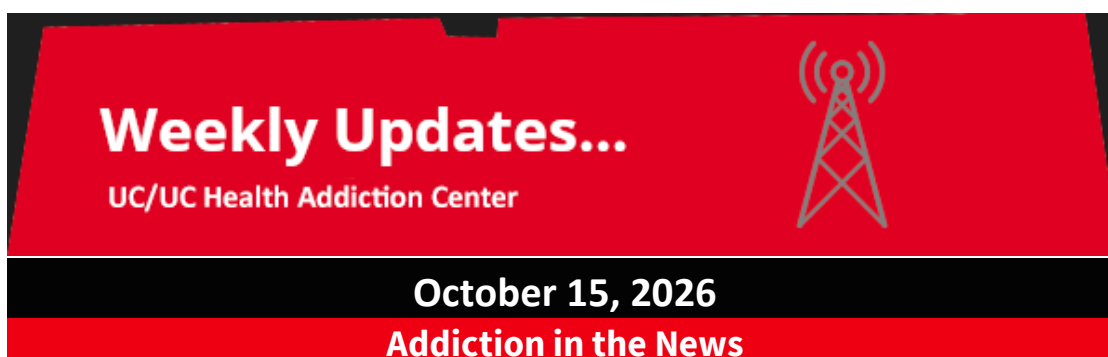


Welcome to the weekly newsletter from the University of Cincinnati/UC Health Addiction Center (UCAC)! Each newsletter includes highlights from addiction in the news topics, active funding opportunities offered by NIDA/NIAAA, and information about any new publications from UCAC researchers. **Please note that the next weekly newsletter will be published Friday, November 6.** Please email Jen Rowe (roweji@ucmail.uc.edu) to change your communication preferences. Thank you.

Thank you for your interest in the UC/UC Health Addiction Center - our mission is to generate new knowledge through innovative research, disseminate that knowledge through education and training, and provide high-quality, evidence-based treatment for individuals affected by addiction and related conditions. We are committed to supporting lifelong recovery and promoting dignity and respect for all individuals on their recovery journey.



UC/ Regional News

Cincinnati man, Villa Hills man sentenced in fentanyl overdose death case

COVINGTON, Ky. (WKRC) — A Cincinnati man and a Villa Hills man were sentenced Thursday to federal prison for their roles in a fentanyl distribution case that resulted in a fatal overdose in Kenton County. Ryan Cooley, of Cincinnati, received a 12 1/2-year sentence. Nicholas Sturgill, of Villa Hills, was sentenced to 10 years. Both were convicted of distributing fentanyl resulting in death, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Kentucky. Federal investigators said Nathaniel Ferguson sold about 50 pressed pills containing fentanyl and xylazine to Cooley on May 21, 2025. Authorities said Cooley then sold the pills to...

National News

Alcohol and the brain interact through immune cells, new research shows

A Cleveland Clinic research team studying alcohol and the brain discovered a new way that alcohol abuse can cause brain dysfunction and damage: through immune cells called microglia. The research also identified a potential new treatment target. The team showed that in a brain affected by alcohol, microglia tear down the extracellular matrix (ECM), the scaffold that surrounds our neurons. The ECM physically holds our brain cells together and allows them to work properly. When it's disrupted, our neurons can't communicate as effectively. Severe ECM disruption can affect our ability to move, think and even remain...

Choline supplementation in young children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder can have durable developmental benefits

Children affected by prenatal alcohol exposure (PAE) experience long-lasting cognitive gains after treatment with supplemental choline, an essential nutrient, a new study suggests. The findings point to a potentially scalable intervention for neurodevelopmental differences that currently have few treatment options. Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) is an umbrella term for several diagnoses that affect 1%–5% of the global population and can involve physical, cognitive and behavioral deficits and challenges. Choline supplementation has been shown to benefit brain development in animal models of PAE. Prenatal choline...

Rise in cannabis-related psychosis hospitalizations sparks concern in Victoria

New research from Monash University shows cannabis-related hospital admissions have risen sharply across Victoria over the past decade, highlighting growing concerns about cannabis-related psychosis and the burden on the state's hospitals. The observational study, published in *Addiction*, found hospital admissions primarily caused by cannabis increased by 49% across Victoria between 2013 and 2023. Psychotic disorders, commonly understood as psychosis, were the most common primary diagnosis, accounting for 40% of admissions. They can cause people to lose touch with reality, including through hallucinations and...

Program helping patients self-regulate strong-opioid use has potential for NHS, study shows

A new support program can increase the number of patients who successfully self-regulate their long-term intake of strong opioid painkillers without worsening their quality of life, a study has shown. The economic evaluation of the Improving the Well-being of People with Opioid Treated Chronic Pain (I-WOTCH) program suggests that while the program costs more upfront, its long-term benefits mean it could be good value for money for the NHS. More than 600 patients with nonmalignant chronic pain took part in the yearlong clinical trial of the program, and 29% in the support group were off strong opioids entirely after 12 months...

CVS agrees to pay \$315 million to settle Justice Department case over opioid prescriptions

WASHINGTON – CVS Pharmacy Inc. and various subsidiaries have agreed to pay \$315 million to resolve a Justice Department case alleging it unlawfully dispensed medically unnecessary prescriptions of highly addictive opioids, officials said Tuesday. The settlement resolves a lawsuit brought in 2024 that accused the healthcare giant of providing massive amounts of opioids and other controlled substances “to fuel its own profits at the expense of public health and safety.” It’s the latest effort by the federal government to hold accountable companies that officials have alleged helped fuel the U.S. addiction and overdose...

Meth Use Disorder May Benefit From Accelerated Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation

An accelerated course of repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) hinted at the potential to treat co-existing methamphetamine use disorder and depression, early data from a small feasibility trial suggested. The protocol included 10-minute sessions of intermittent theta burst stimulation (iTBS) at least 50 minutes apart for a total of 50 sessions over 3 weeks. Before each session, participants were presented images (cues) to induce craving. After 12 visits, participants showed reductions in self-reported methamphetamine craving and overall depression severity, reported Manish Jha, MBBS, of UT Southwestern...

More rehab centers should mean fewer overdoses. In one California region, we found the opposite

At 24, Boyd was living in Chicago when he decided to get help. He had been drinking alcohol since a young age, but more recently he'd been drinking far more often—and dangerously. He found a rehabilitation center online and reached out to the facility in Orange County, an affluent coastal area of Southern California, for treatment. Boyd, a pseudonym used at his mother's request, checked in at the facility, where he completed his initial detox and participated in therapy sessions. He was later readmitted to the same rehab program twice after his initial intake, his mother told the coroner's office of the Orange County Sheriff's...

Study of 20,000 Nigerians explores the links between drug use, climate change and poverty

For years, the world has understood climate change as an environmental problem—melting glaciers, rising seas, extreme weather. But what happens in people's minds when their world becomes unstable? What do they do when the only life they've known—farming, herding, providing for their families—becomes impossible? These questions drove our team of psychiatrists and public health researchers to conduct one of the largest studies of its kind in West Africa. We interviewed 20,000 adults across 40 communities in Kano, Kaduna and Katsina states, a region that sits in the semiarid Sahel belt. Agriculture is a major source...

Funding Opportunities



GRANTS & FUNDING

NIH Central Resource for Grants and Funding Information

[RFA-DA-28-013](#)

Neural Ensembles & Used Substances (NExUS) Collaboratory: Building a Multimodal Inventory of Cell Ensembles Encoding the Effects of Addictive Substances (U01 Clinical Trial Not Allowed)

[PA-27-061](#)

NIH Research Program Projects (Parent P01 Clinical Trial Optional)

[PAR-27-003](#)

Collaborative Program Grant for Interdisciplinary Teams (RM1 Clinical Trial Optional)

New Publications from UCAC Faculty

Interventions to enhance HIV medication adherence among individuals using substances: a systematic review and critique of the literature

Chavez R Rodriguez, McKalaih E Legault, Stephen Beegle, Jason T Blackard, Bingfang Yan, Jaime Robertson, Linh Dinh, Kevin T Fedders, Luis A Gomez, Shaina Horner, T Dylanne Twitty, Jennifer L Brown

AIDS Care

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540121.2025.2602165>

ABSTRACT

Medication adherence is essential to achieve sustained viral suppression for individuals living with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). The use of alcohol and substances may interfere with medication adherence and lead to adverse outcomes. Thus, this review sought to examine the literature on behavioral interventions that improve medication adherence among individuals with HIV who are using alcohol or drugs. Articles were included if they met the following criteria: (a) included individuals diagnosed with HIV (b) were published in English between January 1, 2000 and June 15, 2023, (c) evaluated a behavioral intervention to increase medication adherence, (d) reported at least one medication adherence outcome, (e) were randomized controlled trials or quantitative pre-post designs, and (f) were comprised primarily of individuals using alcohol or drugs. Twenty-two papers representing 20 unique studies were included in the review. Most were undertaken in the United States. Multiple interventions demonstrated efficacy in increasing medication adherence among individuals using alcohol or substances. Interventions with structural intervention components or delivered via text/mHealth also demonstrated relatively consistent efficacy support. Findings were mixed regarding reductions in alcohol and/or substance use, as well as sustaining improvement in medication adherence. Recommendations for future trials include diversifying recruitment methods and examining scalability.

Variation in antiviral immunity and inflammation pathways precedes HIV-1 infection in a high-risk African cohort

Mwikali Kioko, Shaban Mwangi, Lynn Fwambah, Amin S. Hassan, Jason T. Blackard, Philip Bejon, Eduard Sanders, Thumbi Ndung'u, Eunice W. Nduati, and Abdirahman I. Abdi

Journal of Clinical Investigation

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1172/JCI195172>

ABSTRACT

Background: Susceptibility to HIV-1 infection varies between individuals, but the biological determinants of acquisition risk remain poorly defined.

Methods: We conducted a case-control study nested within a high-risk cohort in Kenya. We compared the plasma extracellular RNA collected before HIV-1 acquisition with that from matched uninfected individuals acting as controls to identify immunological processes linked to infection risk.

Results: Individuals who later acquired HIV-1 exhibited upregulation of immune processes that facilitate viral infection, including T cell suppression and type II IFN and Th2 immune responses. In contrast, processes associated with antiviral defence and tissue repair, such as neutrophil and NK cell responses, type I IFN responses, wound healing, and angiogenesis, were downregulated.

Conclusion: These findings highlight dampened antiviral immunity prior to exposure as a correlate of increased risk for subsequent HIV-1 acquisition.

Finding: This work was supported by a Wellcome Trust Award (209289/Z/17/Z) and the Sub-Saharan African Network for TB/HIV Research Excellence (SANTHE) through the Developing Excellence in Leadership, Training and Science in Africa (DELTAS Africa) programme (Del-22-007), which is supported by the Science for Africa Foundation; Wellcome Trust; the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office; the European Union; and the Ragon Institute of Mass General, MIT, and Harvard. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Gilead Sciences Inc., and Aidsfonds provided additional support. The US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) supported the cohort study through the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

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