

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) 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

Ohio judge keeps Gov. DeWine's intoxicating hemp ban on hold

COLUMBUS, Ohio — A legal challenge against Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine's executive order banning intoxicating hemp products has been postponed, allowing sales to continue across the state until a December hearing. Franklin County Judge Carl Aveni extended a previous 14-day Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) after attorneys representing the hemp industry and the governor's office agreed to return to court on Dec. 2. The case, brought by Ohio's hemp industry, challenges DeWine's executive order, which was set to take effect on Oct. 14, that seeks to temporarily ban intoxicating hemp products for 90 days. The governor's order...

Legal marijuana, tax distribution changes closer to reality

Voters who overwhelmingly approved recreational marijuana use in Ohio could soon experience restrictions. Despite the new constitutional amendment that spelled out marijuana regulations, lawmakers want to tighten the reins by limiting where it can be smoked, how it can be transported and the penalties for breaking the law. Lawmakers, however, did keep a 36% cannabis tax that goes toward communities that allow a dispensary. A plan to increase the tax on recreational marijuana from 10% to 15%, however, did not make the final compromise. However, constitutional mandates on how the tax money will be...

Ohio's online betting boom raises addiction alarms

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Since Ohio legalized online sports betting in 2023, the numbers have been staggering. In just a year, the state saw \$180.8 million in tax revenue,

with 98% earmarked for public education. But alongside the economic windfall, experts are raising red flags about the mental health costs of this new betting landscape. “What are the risks of being able to place a bet anytime day or night, right from your phone?” asked Jennifer Grant Weinandy, assistant professor of clinical psychology at Ohio University. The explosion of betting options—many accessible with a single tap—has changed the gambling...

Gov. Beshear: More than 15,000 medical cannabis cards approved in Kentucky

FRANKFORT, Ky. —Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear said more than 15,000 Kentuckians with qualifying conditions have been approved for medical cannabis cards, but it’s not available just yet. In his Team Kentucky update on Thursday, Beshear said there are more than 500 authorized and registered medical marijuana practitioners in the state. While an exact date has not been set for when the medical cannabis program will launch in Kentucky, Beshear says it’s getting closer. “Each day, we’re getting closer to delivering on our promise of safe medical cannabis for Kentuckians in need – and I’m proud of the progress we’re...

National News

A 30-day recall accurately reflects young adult alcohol use behaviors sufficient for research

Research that relies on young adults' self-reporting of their recent alcohol use patterns can obtain similar information from a 30-day recall timeframe compared to a 60-day timeframe. A study published in *Alcohol: Clinical and Experimental Research* found that the shorter lookback timeframe produces comparable information with reduced burden on study staff and participants. Youth alcohol use patterns vary greatly compared to adults, which has led researchers to question the best lookback timeframe for the most accurate assessments of youth alcohol use patterns. Drinking patterns are influenced by school breaks, days of the...

Increased risk of developing alcohol addiction linked to gene mutation

Researchers from the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine at the National University of Singapore (NUS Medicine) report that the gene, *CHRNA3*, acts as a key regulator of alcohol sensitivity. Published in the *Journal of Neuroscience*, the study provides long-sought experimental evidence to back up human genetic studies, linking *CHRNA3* function changes to measurable differences in innate alcohol sensitivity. The study was led by Associate Professor Ajay S. Mathuru from the Department of Physiology at NUS Medicine with first author, Dr. Joshua Raine, Research Fellow, and Dr. Caroline Kibat, Senior Research Fellow, from the same...

Prenatal alcohol exposure rewires the brain and fuels compulsive behavior, new study finds

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD), a leading cause of neurodevelopmental disorders, may affect as many as 1 in 20 school-aged children in the United States. Despite its prevalence, the exact brain circuit responsible for FASD's hallmark

symptom—cognitive inflexibility, or the inability to adjust thoughts and behaviors to new environments—has largely remained a mystery. A new study led by Dr. Jun Wang and co-authored by Dr. Rajesh Miranda, professors at Texas A&M University's Naresh K. Vashisht College of Medicine, observed that alcohol consumption both during pregnancy and around the time of birth...

Americans have widespread misbeliefs about the cancer risks of alcohol, study finds

Despite clear evidence linking alcohol use to increased cancer risks, public awareness of this connection remains low in the U.S., according to new research from The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. Researchers found that more than half of American adults (52.9%) did not know alcohol affects cancer risk. The cross-sectional study, published today in JAMA Oncology, revealed 37.1% of U.S. adults do understand there is a correlation between cancer risk and drinking, and 1% believed that drinking decreased cancer risk. People who had recently consumed alcohol, or who believed that cancer isn't fatal or...

Social media alcohol marketing: Teens exposed face 75% higher odds of recent drinking, study finds

Teens and young adults who see alcohol promotions in their social media feeds are more likely to drink and binge drink, according to a Rutgers Health review of 31 studies that tracked links between exposure to digital alcohol marketing and real-world alcohol use. Jon-Patrick Allem, an associate professor at the Rutgers School of Public Health and Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and a senior author of the study, said the public debate about time spent on social media misses the most important point. "There's growing evidence that it's not how long you spend on social media but what content you see that affects you..."

Diets high in sugar and butter lead to changes in gut microbiome linked to excessive alcohol intake in mice

Mice that switched from a high sugar/butter diet to a standard diet developed a strong preference for alcohol over water, in a study exploring the connection between gastrointestinal microorganisms and alcohol use disorder (AUD). The findings, published in the journal Alcohol, Clinical and Experimental Research, may help lead to new treatments for AUD. Gut microbiota help maintain health, contributing to essential processes including immunity and metabolism. Gut microbiota maintain bidirectional communication with the brain via the gut-brain axis, such that a disturbance in one is linked to changes in the...

Online discrimination fuels drinking by Hispanic college students

Hispanic college students who encounter racial or ethnic discrimination on social media are more likely to turn to alcohol as a coping mechanism, according to a study led by a UT Southwestern Medical Center researcher. Nearly 90% of Hispanic students surveyed reported experiencing online racial or ethnic discrimination

(RED), researchers found. The study, published in the American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse, found that higher levels of RED exposure were associated with greater alcohol consumption through what experts call "coping drinking motives"—the use of alcohol to manage stress or negative...

'Colorado sober' movement ditches alcohol for cannabis, psychedelics

Everything in moderation. Including moderation. That's the idea behind the Colorado sober movement, an unofficial yet growing trend away from alcohol, and toward plant-based and psychedelic drugs. But how can one be considered sober while, for example, smoking pot and taking LSD? Because "Colorado sober"—a spin-off of the similar term "California sober"—isn't about abstaining from all substances, but rather the ones that are known to have lasting effects on your body and brain, advocates say. That includes drugs such as cocaine and opioids, but also alcohol, which has waned in recent years as the standard social lubricant...

Addiction Policy Forum Webinar: Cannabis and Health: What the Science Tells Us

November 14, 2025, 1:00 PM – 2:30 PM ET

There have been national policy changes related to the use of cannabis for medical purposes, yet there are many questions from the public and healthcare providers about medical use. The FDA has approved specific cannabis-derived and cannabis-related therapeutics for treating certain medical conditions, but it has not approved cannabis itself for treating any health conditions. This webinar will examine the scientific evidence on cannabis and health, while separating evidence-based facts from common myths. Speakers will provide an overview of what is known about cannabis' medical applications, limitations in the research, and its public health implications. Presenters will also address common myths, highlight what science has yet to establish, and provide resources for those seeking reliable information.

Teenagers and young adults who use cannabis have a higher risk of progressing to regular tobacco use, study finds

Teens and young adults who use cannabis are more likely to become regular tobacco users—even if they haven't previously tried tobacco—compared to similar people who do not use cannabis, suggests a US study published online in the journal Tobacco Control. Around 13% of new onset tobacco use was estimated to be attributable to cannabis, the study found. Tobacco smoking has been considered a gateway to cannabis use since the 1970s, when smoking was much more prevalent and when almost all people who used cannabis had smoked tobacco first. Although tobacco use among teens and young adults has...

How dual smokers of pot and tobacco feel the burn of higher prices

People who smoke both tobacco and cannabis are more sensitive to paying more for cigarettes than those who just smoke cigarettes, according to a new UC San Francisco study. Raising the cost of a pack of cigarettes, whether because of taxes

or price hikes, has long been associated with lower consumption. But little is known about how it affects those who use both cannabis and cigarettes. UCSF researchers used data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health from 2004 to 2019 as well as state-level cigarette pricing data. They compared cigarette price sensitivity between adults who use cannabis with those who did not use it...

Oral nicotine pouches studied as a tool to quit smoking

In ongoing efforts to pinpoint the best evidence-based ways to quit smoking, a University of Massachusetts Amherst public health researcher has turned her attention to a tobacco-free product gaining in popularity across the country—oral nicotine pouches. In the first review on the topic, published in the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, the evidence suggests that switching to oral nicotine pouches from smoking reduces exposure to harmful substances, "which is what we would expect to find," says senior author Jamie Hartmann-Boyce, assistant professor of health policy and management at the School of Public...

US appeals court overturns West Virginia landmark opioid lawsuit decision

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — A federal appeals court on Tuesday overturned a landmark decision in West Virginia that had rejected attempts by an opioid-ravaged area to be compensated by U.S. drug distributors for an influx of prescription pain pills into the region. The 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond, Virginia, ruled that a lower court judge erred when he said West Virginia's public nuisance law did not apply to the lawsuit involving the distribution of opioids. "West Virginia law permits abatement of a public nuisance to include a requirement that a defendant pay money to fund efforts to eliminate the..."

Study examines trends for use of medications for opioid use disorder among surgical patients

In an effort to stem the death toll from opioid overdose, United States public health officials have promoted the prescription and use of medications like buprenorphine that blunt the effects of illicit opioids such as fentanyl. However, what happens when patients on these medications require surgery and anesthesia? Currently, there are no evidence-based guidelines to help clinicians handle this patient population. To fill in knowledge gaps, Mark Bicket, M.D., Ph.D., and his team examined trends in use of medications for opioid use disorder among surgical patients. The results are published in the journal...

Geography shapes opioid crisis: Study points to state policies involving 'pill mills'

The U.S. opioid crisis has varied in severity across the country, leading to extended debate about how and why it has spread. Now, a study co-authored by MIT economists sheds new light on these dynamics, examining the role that geography has played in the crisis. The results show how state-level policies inadvertently contributed to the rise of opioid addiction, and how addiction itself is a central

driver of the long-term problem. The research analyzes data about people who moved within the U.S., as a way of addressing a leading question about the crisis: How much of the problem is attributable to local factors, and to what...

Opioid Overprescribing Seen in Older Patients With Rheumatic Diseases

CHICAGO -- Urgent advice to prescribe alternatives to opioid painkillers doesn't seem to be getting through to clinicians who treat older people with rheumatologic conditions, according to a study presented here. Clinical and Medicare records for more than 40,000 patients seen at U.S. rheumatology clinics in 2021 showed that 43.3% received at least one prescription for opioids, reported Christine Anastasiou, MD, of Stanford University in Palo Alto, California. About one-fifth of patients got prescriptions covering 90 days or more, and just under 20,000 prescriptions were for doses of 50 or more morphine milligram...

Efforts to promote safer opioid prescribing in Canada appear to be having an effect

Efforts to promote safer opioid prescribing in Canada appear to be having an effect, as new research in the Canadian Medical Association Journal shows a decrease in opioid dispensing between 2018 and 2022. In the early 2000s, use of prescription opioids to treat acute and chronic noncancer pain increased substantially in Canada, and with it came a rise in opioid-related harms. The availability of more opioid products, coupled with aggressive marketing of these drugs, contributed to these early increases in Canada and in other countries. Many initiatives have been introduced with the goal of reducing these harms throughout the...

Is Canada failing the rising numbers of youth who use opioids?

Youth opioid use is increasing in Canada, as are related emergency department visits and deaths, yet governments are not providing adequate support to address this public health crisis, argue the authors of a CMAJ (Canadian Medical Association Journal) editorial. "If this crisis is not properly addressed now, Canada's health systems will play a part in perpetuating the opioid crisis for decades to come," write Dr. Shannon Charlebois, medical editor, CMAJ, and Dr. Shawn Kelly, a pediatrician and addictions medicine specialist, CHEO and the University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Ontario. In Ontario, students' use of prescription opioid...

Legal highs: These new drugs are cheap, dangerous, and just a click away

Imagine a world where you can buy recreational drugs online and receive them in the mail. Well, this world already exists, and not just with one or two substances, but hundreds. These drugs are known as new psychoactive substances (NPS), and their popularity shows no signs of slowing down. They are created with one very clear objective: to imitate the effects of well-known drugs like cannabis, cocaine, ecstasy (MDMA) or LSD, but with slightly modified chemical structures that get around existing laws. Their "legality" may give a false sense of safety, but this couldn't be any further from the truth: these are little-researched...

Genetic underpinnings of substance use disorders in Europe, Africa and America identified, some previously unknown

Substance use disorders (SUDs) are mental health conditions characterized by the compulsive, uncontrolled and deleterious use of alcohol, tobacco, stimulants (e.g., cocaine or methamphetamines), opioids, cannabis and/or various other substances. These disorders are a key health concern worldwide, as they can be highly debilitating and can sometimes even lead to serious diseases, physical disabilities and even death. While several studies have tried to uncover the factors that increase the risk of developing SUDs, much about their origin remains poorly understood. Past findings suggest that these disorders have a genetic...

Showing kids the science behind addiction - in a hands-on way they won't forget

If the science of addiction sounds like a dry subject that calls for long lectures and scads of statistics, what you're about to read will probably surprise you. It sure surprised some of the kids who took part in these events. But that's the point: to show just how fascinating the field of addiction science can be with the right experts, a brainy demonstration and exposure to cutting-edge research. Christopher Cowan, Ph.D., has led a trio of addiction science educational events for junior high and high school students through the Charleston County Public Library System in recent months. He's a professor and chair of the Department...

As Sports Betting Explodes, States Try To Set Limits To Stop Gambling Addiction

It isn't easy to promote moderation and financial discipline from the bowels of a casino. This article is part of a partnership with NPR and New England Public Media. It can be republished for free. But that's what Massachusetts state workers try to do every day, amid the clanging bells and flashing lights of the slot machines. At the MGM Springfield in western Massachusetts, workers wearing green polos stand outside their small office, right off the casino floor. Above them, a sign reads "GameSense," the state's signature program to curb problem gambling. A mounted screen cycles through messages such as "Keep sports..."

What messages are the most effective to deter gambling?

Gambling advertising is everywhere. Even people who have never placed a bet are familiar with slogans like "Gamble responsibly," "When the fun stops" and "Take time to think." But these industry-developed messages could soon change, with the government and the gambling regulator working to create independent warnings for gambling, much like those found on tobacco and alcohol packaging. Our research has long argued that such changes are needed. Australia took this step in 2023, imposing health warnings for gambling advertisements and websites. By studying how gamblers perceive Australia's messaging...

Combined HIV vaccines can act in concert to achieve diverse antibody priming

Researchers at La Jolla Institute for Immunology, Scripps Research, and the Ragon Institute of MGH, MIT, and Harvard report coordinated studies showing that several HIV germline-targeting immunogens can be delivered together to activate multiple broadly neutralizing antibody precursors. HIV vaccine design faces the challenge that B cells capable of maturing into broadly neutralizing antibodies (bnAb) are exceptionally rare and poorly stimulated by standard antigens. Most immune responses concentrate on variable parts of the viral envelope rather than the conserved regions that would enable cross-strain protection...

Scientists had to change more than 700 grant titles to receive NIH funding.

Health disparities researchers fear what's next

BETHESDA, Md. — For months, Vanderbilt sociologist Tara McKay had waited for the notice that her grant had been renewed for another year, a signoff that had always been routine. Instead, while sick at home, she got a panicked phone call from her program officer at the National Institutes of Health that she had 24 hours to alter the language of her grant title — otherwise it would be at risk of not being funded. McKay is familiar with the notion that partisan politics can have a deep impact on science and health. The grant, after all, was tracking the ripple effects of the decision by Tennessee's Republican governor to reject...

Trump cuts have decimated the federal addiction and mental health agency

The Trump administration has dismantled large portions of the federal agency focused on mental health and addiction treatment, reducing its staff by more than half and alarming local governments, nonprofits, and behavioral health providers that rely on the office for funding and expertise, according to a STAT examination. Since January, layoffs and funding cuts at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration have ground much of the agency's work to a halt. The agency has terminated \$1.7 billion in block grants for state health departments and cut roughly \$350 million in addiction and overdose prevention...

Funding Opportunities



There are no new NIH Grants Funding Opportunities to post this week.

CAR Member New Publications

An individual-level data synthesis of Clinical Trials Network studies to examine the impact of psychosocial treatments for Black people who use cocaine and/or opioids

A. Kathleen Burtlew, Lesia M. Ruglass, Adriana Espinosa, Caravella McCuistian, Angela M. Haeny, Ayana Jordan, Christopher Roundtree, Joel Lopez, Ashley Vena, Antonio A. Morgan-López

Drug and Alcohol Dependence

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2025.112850>

ABSTRACT

Objective: Cocaine- and opioid-related overdose deaths have increased among Black people, which makes identifying effective treatments for Black people a high priority. We investigated the comparative effectiveness of behavioral treatments among Black adults who use cocaine and/or opioids.

Methods: Identified multisite randomized clinical trials (RCTs) of behavioral interventions that targeted substance use, had participants who self-identified as Black, and included cocaine use outcome measures from the National Drug Abuse Treatment Clinical Trials Network (CTN) datashare. We estimated cocaine use and opioid use severity scale scores while considering study-level measurement non-invariance. Then, we estimated the inverse probability of treatment-weighted (IPTW) linear mixed models to assess comparative effectiveness of treatments that address social-contextual factors and those focused solely on substance use (e.g., contingency management (CM)) relative to treatment-as-usual/controls on cocaine use and opioid use severity scores during- and post-treatment.

Results: Nine RCTs met inclusion criteria, with a combined sample of 1381 Black adults who used cocaine and/or opioids. The IPTW linear mixed models indicated that cocaine use severity decreased from baseline to end-of-treatment across three treatment groups, with a greater decrease for social-contextual treatments and CM relative to treatment-as-usual/controls. However, this greater reduction was maintained at 12-month follow-ups for social-contextual treatments, while CM worsened relative to TAU/controls. We found decreases in latent opioid use severity with no or minor differences between treatment groups.

Conclusions: The findings suggest that addressing social-contextual factors is an essential treatment component for long-term reduction of cocaine use among Black adults.

Negative urgency accounts for associations between internalizing symptoms and lifetime nonfatal opioid overdose among patients from three urban Ohio emergency departments

Dan Petrovitch, Katie P Himes, Emma Quarles, Caroline E Freiermuth, Robert S Braun, Joshua W Lambert, Jennifer L Brown, Michael S Lyons, Brittany E Panches, Jon E Sprague, Andrew K Littlefield

ABSTRACT

Existing evidence relates internalizing psychopathology to nonfatal opioid overdose. Identifying variables that account for associations between internalizing symptomology and overdose could improve clinical conceptualizations of overdose risk and inform testable, mechanistic hypotheses. Mood-based facets of impulsivity, such as negative and positive urgency, are promising candidate variables that have been linked to both internalizing symptoms and negative substance use outcomes. Therefore, the present study tested whether these facets accounted for internalizing-overdose associations. We conducted a secondary, cross-sectional data analysis of lifetime opioid-exposed patients presenting to three large, urban emergency departments in Ohio. Bivariate associations between measures of internalizing conditions, mood-related urgency, and nonfatal opioid overdose were calculated, and the extent to which negative and positive urgency accounted for associations between internalizing constructs and nonfatal opioid overdose was examined. To determine the specificity of findings, we compared results to other impulsivity facets and models testing internalizing-impulsivity interactions. Negative urgency demonstrated a unique role in accounting for relationships between internalizing constructs and lifetime nonfatal opioid overdose. No other impulsivity facet, including positive urgency, reliably accounted for internalizing-overdose relations. No internalizing-urgency interactions were observed. Negative urgency was the only facet to reliably explain overlap in internalizing-overdose associations. Overdose-prevention efforts should consider the dual roles of internalizing symptoms and negative urgency as risk factors for opioid overdose. Implications for testing causal hypotheses are discussed. (PsycInfo Database Record (c) 2025 APA, all rights reserved).

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