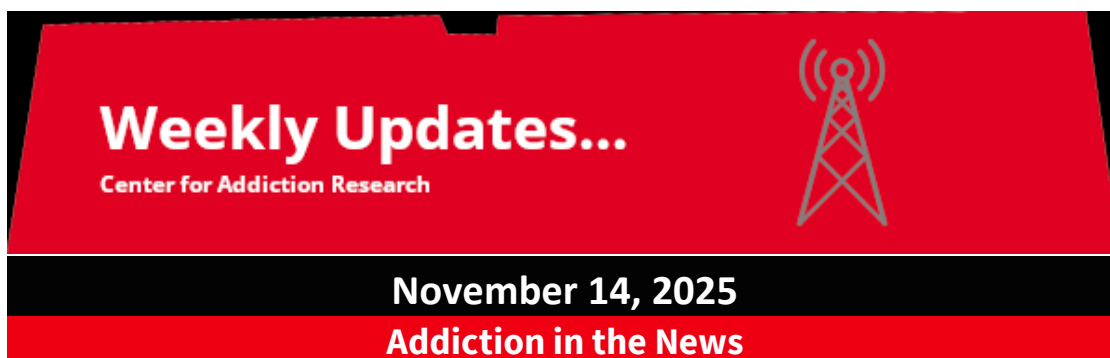


Welcome to the weekly newsletter from the Center for Addiction Research! Each newsletter includes highlights from addiction in the news topics, active funding opportunities offered by NIDA/NIAAA, and information about any new publications from CAR members. Please email Jen Rowe (roweji@ucmail.uc.edu)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

Artificial intelligence chatbots raise concerns over potential addiction

Artificial intelligence is becoming a staple in daily life, and while some embrace it, mental health professionals are raising concerns about its potential addictive nature, likening it to substances like drugs, alcohol, and gambling. Dr. Chris Tuell, clinical director at the Lindner Center of Hope, likens AI chatbots to a best friend, available 24/7, providing instant gratification that can be addictive. "It's kind of like a best friend, right? It's there for me 24/7. It's there during good times and in bad, and I can always count on it when I can't count on people in my life," Tuell said. The long-term impacts of AI on human behavior are still...

A Medetomidine Training: Facts & Best Practice in the Addiction Space

Wednesday, December 3, 2025, 2:00 PM – 3:30 PM

Hamilton County MHR SB, 2350 Auburn Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45219

This is a free of cost educational session open to all professionals working in the addiction response space.

Hosted by the Office of Addiction Response, Hamilton County Mental Health and Recovery Services Board, University of Cincinnati College of Medicine and Hamilton County Public Health.

What You Will Learn:

- What Medetomidine is and what are its side effects.

- About current drug supply trends to prevent overdoses and other health consequences.
- What harm reduction methods work against non-opioid drugs.
- About Withdrawal Management best practices and standard protocols.

Congress is set to ban hemp. Ohio may not comply.

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Ohio leaders are debating whether or not to comply with an expected federal ban on "intoxicating hemp" products. "It's not fair," said Meredith Farrow, owner of hemp business Clean Remedies in Avon. As the federal government shutdown looks like it's coming to an end, hemp sellers like Farrow were surprised by the Senate. When voting to open the government, policymakers closed a loophole created in the 2018 Farm Bill, which allowed for low-level THC products to be sold without regulation. Congress's Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (Farm Bill) allowed for hemp products to be sold as long as...

How opioid settlement money is being used in Portage County to fight addiction

RAVENNA, Ohio — Ohio received billions of dollars in settlements from drug manufacturers and distributors for their role in the opioid epidemic. While much of that money flows to the state's OneOhio program, about 30% goes directly to local governments. News 5 has covered extensively how OneOhio is allocating its funds, but our news station wanted to see how the money would be used by local governments and at the local level. Documents obtained by News 5 show Portage County has received about \$2.3 million so far. At the Portage County Probation Department, the clock was ticking. They had received a federal grant several...

Quitting Tobacco: Overcoming the Hidden Dangers of Nicotine

Quitting smoking is one of the most powerful decisions you can make for your health and your future. It's not just about adding years to your life — it's about adding life to your years. Imagine breathing easier, feeling stronger and having more energy to enjoy the moments that matter most. Every step you take toward quitting is a victory, no matter how small. Thousands of people kick the habit every year, and you can be one of them. "I quit vaping. Everything smells better and tastes better. The [nicotine replacement therapy] patch and sheer determination helped me quit." — Medina County resident. Tobacco and nicotine...

Ohio Senate considers bill to regulate kratom production and sales

COLUMBUS — Kratom sellers and manufacturers may face stricter regulations on the products they can produce or sell if Senate Bill 299 passes — a move that is supported by local healthcare providers. The bill, which some lawmakers are calling the Kratom Consumer Protection Act, was introduced in the Ohio Senate by Senator Louis W. Blessing, III (R-8) on Oct. 21. If Senate Bill 299 passes, it would: Require manufacturers, distributors, and sellers of kratom products to register their

products with the Ohio Department of Agriculture, which includes a registration fee. Prohibit the sale of synthetic kratom compounds and sets a...

Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear moves to ban 'monster' smoke shop drug '7-OH'

FRANKFORT, Ky. (WKRC) - Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear announced his administration will take action against a "monster" drug being sold at some smoke shops. According to a press release, Governor Andy Beshear announced that 7-hydroxymitragynine (7-OH) will be classified as a Schedule I narcotic in the State of Kentucky, which will make the substance illegal to sell, possess, or distribute any isolated or concentrated forms. "We have marked three straight years of declines in overdose deaths in Kentucky, and that is progress we're committed to building on as we work to protect more lives in the fight against..."

National News

Preclinical study supports use of psychedelics for treating alcohol use disorders

A psychedelic found in mushrooms is emerging as a potential treatment for alcohol use disorders. This possibility is due to a compound the body converts the psychedelic into called psilocin, but psilocin's mechanisms remain unclear. Researchers, led by Sarah Magee and Melissa Herman at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, explored whether psilocin targets neurons in the central amygdala involved in emotional processing and stress to alter alcohol use in their JNeurosci paper. Herman emphasizes that preclinical work like this is necessary for filling gaps in knowledge about drug mechanisms, especially in the field of...

Experimental compound curbs alcohol intake and motivation in mice, with sex-dependent differences

A new compound tested at the Miguel Hernández University of Elche (UMH) in Spain shows promising effects in reducing alcohol consumption and motivation to drink in mice, with marked sex-dependent differences in efficacy. Although MCH11 is not yet available for human use, it could pave the way for personalized treatments of alcohol use disorder. The results, published in the journal Biomedicine & Pharmacotherapy, stem from four years of work by a team from the Institute of Neurosciences (a joint UMH-CSIC center), the Institute for Health and Biomedical Research of Alicante (ISABIAL), and the Primary Care Addiction Research...

The Sugar Pathway That Links Alcohol Addiction and Liver Damage

Alcohol hijacks the body's sugar metabolism, producing internal fructose that reinforces addiction and liver damage. Blocking this process may help treat both alcohol use disorder and liver disease. Scientists have discovered a surprising biological link between how the body processes sugar and how it responds to alcohol. The finding points to a possible new treatment strategy for alcohol-associated liver disease (ALD) and alcohol use disorder (AUD). In research published

today (November 10) in *Nature Metabolism*, a team at the University of Colorado Anschutz found that drinking alcohol activates a metabolic pathway that causes...

Nearly one in four adult Arkansans used tobacco in last 30 days

New findings from the Arkansas Health Survey, the largest and most comprehensive health survey in the state's history, reveal that 24.1% of Arkansas adults who used tobacco was well above the national average of 18%, as reported by the Centers for Disease Control. "Tobacco use remains one of the most urgent public health challenges facing Arkansas," said Michael Niño, University of Arkansas associate professor of sociology and criminology, who led the survey. Use of tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in Arkansas and throughout the United States. It is linked with chronic conditions such as...

Opinion: How e-cigarettes compromise children's human rights

Exposing children to e-cigarettes compromises their human rights. These products should be regulated in a way that puts children's best interests first and protects them from the harms associated with nicotine consumption in all its forms, argue experts in *The BMJ*. Children are now using e-cigarettes at higher rates than adults, write Tom Gatehouse and colleagues. Globally, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 7.2% of children aged 13–15 currently use e-cigarettes. Data indicate use in this group is nine times that of adults, in countries which monitor both groups. As their brains are still developing, adolescents...

Q&A: What to know about vaping risks for young people

While vaping has been touted by manufacturers as a safer smoking alternative, the public health community is careful to point out the risks. Since the introduction of e-cigarettes to the U.S. in 2007, vaping has taken hold among young people, with approximately 6% of surveyed middle and high school students reporting using e-cigarettes in 2024. Columbia pediatric pulmonologist Alexandra Kass, MD, and addiction psychiatrist Silvia Franco Corso, MD, see the many ways in which vaping affects the body and behavior—especially among their younger patients. They explain the impact of vaping on the lungs, heart, and brain...

Covid-era rules for addiction medication, Ritalin are extended again

The Trump administration appears poised to extend a temporary, Covid-era rule allowing health providers to prescribe certain controlled substances, like ADHD medications and treatments for opioid addiction, via telemedicine. Under the current rules, providers can initiate prescriptions for drugs like Ritalin or Adderall for ADHD, or buprenorphine for opioid use disorder, without first examining the patient in-person. The extension would mark the fourth time that the federal government has re-upped the flexibilities, enacted by the Drug Enforcement Administration during March 2020 as the Covid-19 pandemic accelerated...

Scientists Discover a Natural, Non-Addictive Way To Block Pain That Could Replace Opioids

A groundbreaking study led by a University of Leeds scientist has unveiled new insights into how the body manages pain, offering a potential path toward treating long-term pain without relying on addictive opioids. Professor Nikita Gamper, from the School of Biomedical Sciences at Leeds, and his research team discovered that the human body can generate its own form of natural “sleeping pills” that resemble benzodiazepines. These substances can reduce signals from specific nerves, influencing how intensely pain is felt. The research, which builds upon earlier studies conducted by Professor Gamper and Professor Xiaona Du of...

A new, potent street drug is causing severe withdrawal, and doctors are scrambling to respond

Dominic Cipriano couldn't stop shaking. A drug dealer on the streets of Kensington had sold him a bag of what he thought was fentanyl. And when he entered withdrawal, he started rocking from side to side, wracked by uncontrollable tremors. Cipriano was experiencing the effects of a powerful veterinary tranquilizer, called medetomidine, never approved for human use. It causes sedation so intense that users commonly black out, followed by a constellation of withdrawal symptoms that can be life-threatening. By early 2025, medetomidine was showing up in 70% of the illicit opioid samples tested in Philadelphia, alongside other...

Why there may be a link to ADHD and substance use among young sexual minority men

Young sexual minority men—a term used to describe gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men—with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) symptoms are more likely to begin using substances such as cigarettes, alcohol, cannabis, stimulants and illicit drugs at an earlier age, according to Rutgers Health researchers. The study, published in the *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health* and led by the Center for Health, Identity, Behavior & Prevention Studies (CHIBPS) at the Rutgers School of Public Health, analyzed data from 597 young sexual minority men to assess ADHD symptoms and their associations with substance...

Models May Spot Risk for Death, Overdose Before Discharges Against Medical Advice

Risk prediction models may help clinicians identify patients at risk of death or overdose after discharge against medical advice, a retrospective population-based cohort study suggested. Among 6,440 hospital admissions included in the model estimating risk of death, 1.6% were associated with the death of a patient within 30 days of discharge against medical advice, reported Hiten Naik, MD, of the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada, and colleagues. In 4,466 hospital admissions included in the model estimating illicit drug overdose, 5.2% were associated with overdose within 30 days of discharge against...

The rise of sports betting is a growing public health crisis

When the Supreme Court struck down the federal ban on sports betting in 2018, Americans legally wagered less than \$5 billion on sports annually. Last year, they bet \$150 billion. What's emerged isn't just a bigger gambling market but a public health crisis in the making, with young men as its primary casualties. Today 90% of bets are placed on phones, not at casinos or racetracks. More than half are live bets, placed while games are in progress. Open any betting app and you'll find hundreds of options per game: not just who wins but whether the next pitch will be a ball or a strike, whether Shohei Ohtani will get a home run and five...

Funding Opportunities



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

CAR Member New Publications

Congratulations to **Dr. Victor Schneider, Assistant Clinical Professor and CAR Member**, and Dr. Christian Garcia on the acceptance of their two abstracts for presentation at the highly competitive 'Alcoholism and Stress: A Framework for Future Treatment' conference to be held in Volterra, Italy (May 2026).

Table for one: relationships of heavy drinking, loneliness, and stress

Victor J. Schneider, PhD¹, Christian C. Garcia, PhD^{2,3}, & Jeff Boissoneault, PhD⁴

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²The Graduate College, University of Cincinnati

³Department of Psychology, University of Cincinnati

⁴Department of Anesthesiology, University of Minnesota

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is the United States' largest nationwide survey of health-related risk behaviors and use of preventative services (CDC, 2025). Recent assessments indicate that although tobacco use has declined in recent years, heavy drinking has increased. This is attributed in part to ongoing stress and loneliness following the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these trends, research on relationships between heavy drinking, stress, and other health and psychosocial factors remains limited.

To address this gap, we obtained permission from the Ohio Department of Health to analyze self-reported 2023 BRFSS data from a sample of 4411 adults (Mage= 57.1±17.2, 52% female). Linear regression was run to examine the relationship of heavy drinking and loneliness on stress in the last month with participant age, sex, years of education, income, and chronic pain status as covariates. The overall model was significant ($R^2=0.292$, $p<.001$), with older ($\beta=0.018$, $p<.001$), male ($\beta=0.18$, $p<.001$), and higher income ($\beta=0.043$, $p<.001$) participants reporting less stress and participants with chronic pain ($\beta=-0.25$, $p<.001$) and loneliness

($\beta=0.47$, $p<.001$) reporting more stress. No significant effect was found of heavy drinking status ($\beta=-0.040$, $p=.212$) or education ($\beta=-0.0061$, $p=.715$). Post hoc analysis revealed weak but significant correlations between heavy drinking and frequency of loneliness ($r=-0.05$, $p<.001$) and chronic pain ($r=-0.04$, $r<.001$).

Results suggest that adults reporting loneliness and chronic pain may benefit from increased access to strategies for managing stress and drinking behavior. Future studies should explore loneliness and chronic pain as mediators for the relationship of heavy drinking and reported stress.

Relationship between patterns of drinking behavior and subjective cognitive decline in midlife and older adults

Christian C. Garcia^{1,2}, PhD, Victor J. Schneider, PhD³, & Rose Marie Ward, PhD²

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Recent epidemiological studies highlight the need to examine drinking patterns as predictors of accelerated cognitive decline in older adults. Subjective cognitive decline (SCD), or self-reported decline in memory and attention without objective evidence of impairment, appears elevated among heavy drinkers. However, few studies have investigated how drinking behaviors (i.e., any vs. binge vs. heavy drinking) relate to SCD in midlife and older adults.

We analyzed responses from adults aged 45+ ($n=4465$, $\text{Mage}=65.8\pm11.18$, 55.6% women) collected through the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). A logistic regression examined associations between alcohol use patterns and SCD. The overall model (Block 1) was significant ($p=0.006$), with any alcohol use showing significantly lower odds ($\text{OR}=0.76$, 95%CI [0.64,0.91], $p=0.003$) and heavy drinking showing significantly higher odds ($\text{OR}=1.60$, 95%CI [1.06,2.42], $p=0.027$) of SCD. Interestingly, adding demographic covariates (sex, education, metropolitan status; Block 2; $p<.001$) removed the protective effect of any drinking ($\text{OR}=0.86$, 95%CI [0.72,1.03], $p=0.108$). Heavy drinking remained a significant predictor showing 61% greater odds of reporting SCD ($\text{OR}=1.61$, 95%CI [1.06,2.45], $p=0.025$). Higher education was a strong protective factor ($\text{OR}=0.65$, 95%CI [0.55,0.77], $p<0.001$). Although both models adequately fit the data (Hosmer–Lemeshow p 's >0.05), classification rates remained skewed.

Findings suggest consistent heavy drinking (i.e., weekly) may have a greater influence on perceptions of cognitive decline than other drinking patterns, supporting prior work indicating recent alcohol consumption, rather than lifetime use, may be most detrimental to cognition. Interventions targeting reduced total monthly volume of alcohol consumed may help to mitigate subjective cognitive decline in heavy-drinking older adults.

