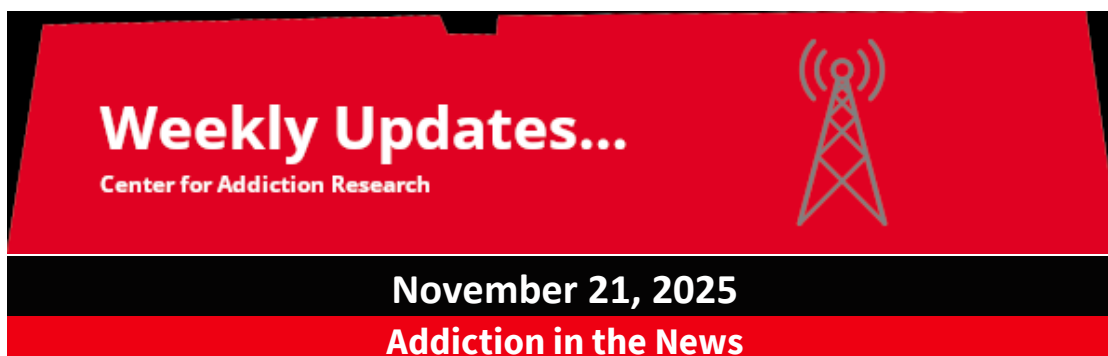


Welcome to the weekly newsletter from the Center for Addiction Research! Each newsletter includes highlights from addiction in the news topics, active funding opportunities offered by NIDA/NIAAA, and information about any new publications from CAR members. Please email Jen Rowe (roweji@ucmail.uc.edu) to change your communication preferences. **Please note that the next weekly newsletter will be published Friday, December 5.** 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 lawmakers may compromise on marijuana, hemp policy but no changes to take effect soon

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The Ohio House and the Senate may come to a compromise on marijuana and "intoxicating" hemp policy after an earlier deal went up in smoke Wednesday night. At 11:30 p.m. on Wednesday, the Senate Bill 56 conference committee held a meeting to discuss details. A proposal was passed out of the six-person committee around midnight, with both Democrats voting against it. "I commend the Senate for working with the House and preserving the overwhelming majority of those provisions that both parties supported just two weeks ago," House Rep. Brian Stewart (R-Ashville) said. Representatives told us...

Committee in Ohio Statehouse to discuss release of cannabis tax funds

COLUMBUS, Ohio —A push at the Ohio Statehouse to finally open up the flow of money that cities have been promised for over a year will come Wednesday. Tens of millions of dollars are sitting in a state fund, all from the 10% excise tax on adult-use cannabis sales. Voters approved a plan in 2023 to send a portion of that tax back to communities where dispensaries operate to support education, addiction treatment and other local services. But two years in, cities and townships haven't received a single dollar. Wednesday, a state conference committee is considering a bill to clear the way for that money to be released. It also...

Cincinnati fentanyl dealer hit with 18-year prison sentence

CINCINNATI — A Cincinnati drug dealer who dealt in fentanyl, cocaine, methamphetamine and marijuana and who shot a rival dealer last year has been handed an 18-year prison sentence in U.S. District Court. Robert Lee Howard, 34, was charged in a criminal complaint back in June last year and pleaded guilty in July of this year, according to a press release from the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Ohio. That release notes that Howard had been captured on camera in February last year "shooting a rival fentanyl dealer repeatedly in the chest, after losing a bet over who sold more potent..."

Local man turns pornography addiction into national healing program for men

CINCINNATI (WKRC) - After years of battling addiction, Chuck Moore, a husband and father, has transformed his life experiences into a national program aimed at helping others. Moore, the founder of the Healthy Sexuality Healing Group, shared his journey, hoping to inspire others to seek help. "I developed a lot of compulsive sexual behaviors," said Moore. "It became worse and worse over time, until finally I realized my life was a complete disaster." Moore's path to recovery began with a 12-step style program, similar to Alcoholics Anonymous. He realized that discussions about such addictions were often avoided, even...

Faces of the fight: Battling drug addiction in Lucas County | 11 Investigates

TOLEDO, Ohio — Samantha McFarland's blue eyes mist as she fights back tears inside Vital Health in Maumee. "I'm not gonna cry," she proclaims, but isn't very convincing, "but it's super cool today for me, the relationship that I'm able to have with him." She nods toward Shawn McMahon, who beams with pride as McFarland discusses a journey that would have broken many people at many of the steps along the way. Their relationship began in some of the darkest days of McFarland's life. She was an addict, lying in a hospital bed, wondering when she would be released so she could get her next hit of heroin. He was a Lucas...

Ohio State's Center for Psychedelic Drug Research and Education collaborates with MAPS for the Ohio P.E.A.C.E. program

Over the last decade, increased media attention on the potential benefits of using psychedelic drugs for medicinal and therapeutic purposes has led to a corresponding rise in non-use of these drugs. According to the 2024 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, the percentage of people aged 12 or older who used hallucinogens in the past year increased from 2.7% (or 7.6 million people) in 2021 to 3.6% (or 10.4 million people). Without dosage guidance, trained supervision, or other risk reduction mechanisms in place, new users of psychedelics may find themselves in an overwhelming or dysregulating situation. If...

National News

Alcohol-Related Deaths Rise: Women Fare the Worst

As we enter the holiday season, many of us will throw or attend holiday gatherings or parties. Thanksgiving and Christmas cocktails and New Year's plans are heavily promoted in magazines, newspapers, and Food Network shows. It is important to remember that some of our friends, family members, and neighbors may be struggling with addiction, and this time of year is always harder for them. Due to the stigma associated with substance use disorders, we may not even know they are struggling, as they are keeping a difficult secret, for fear of shame or judgment. New and alarming research reveals that now more than ever...

'California Sober' Trend Gets a Little Support From Trial

Smoking cannabis did not cut self-reported alcohol cravings in people with heavy cannabis and alcohol use, but it may reduce the short-term urge to drink and consumption, findings of a randomized trial suggested. Overall, neither 7.2% nor 3.1% delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)-containing cigarettes had a significant, immediate effect compared with placebo cigarettes on the study's primary outcome of alcohol craving, as measured by the Alcohol Craving Questionnaire-Short Form, Revised. However, the single "I have an urge for alcohol" item rating did fall with higher-dose cannabis (7.2%) relative to placebo, with mean...

Smoking cannabis and eating highly processed foods raise cardiac health risks, study finds

Smoking cannabis can increase the risk of heart problems—but doing so and eating highly processed foods increases cardiac health risks even more, a new University of South Florida study says. The combination may weaken the immune system, leading to a higher risk of cardiac problems. Consuming a diet heavy in processed foods, especially those laden with seed oils, and smoking cannabis may compromise the immune system, according to the paper newly published online in the journal Life Sciences. That, in turn, impedes the immune system's response from being activated to repair any damage to the heart caused by...

Smoking cannabis with tobacco may disrupt the brain's "bliss molecule"

People who use both cannabis and tobacco show measurable differences in brain activity compared to those who rely solely on cannabis, according to new findings from a McGill University team at the Douglas Research Centre. These results may help clarify why people who combine the two substances more often experience symptoms such as anxiety and depression, and why attempts to quit cannabis tend to be more difficult for them than for people who avoid tobacco. "This is the first evidence in humans of a molecular mechanism that may underlie why people who use both cannabis and tobacco experience worse..."

Even low-intensity smoking increases risk of heart attack and death, study finds

An analysis of data from almost two dozen long-term studies finds that even low-intensity smokers have a substantially higher risk of heart disease and death compared to people who never smoked, even years after they quit. Michael Blaha of the Johns Hopkins Ciccarone Center for Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease and colleagues report these findings in PLOS Medicine. Previous research has shown that smoking cigarettes increases a person's risk of developing cardiovascular disease, but the exact relationship between how heavily a person smokes and their risks is still unclear, especially for low-intensity smokers. Today, more...

WHO chief urges clampdown on nicotine products aimed at kids

Sleek-looking disposable e-cigarettes and candy-flavored nicotine pouches are among a range of new products targeting young people and fueling a new wave of tobacco and nicotine addiction, the WHO warned Monday. Speaking at the opening of a global conference on tobacco control, World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus decried that surging numbers of children were being drawn to the new products. "Schools are the new frontline in the war against tobacco and nicotine, where companies are actively recruiting generations of addicts," he warned. A WHO report released last month...

Judge says he'll approve opioid settlement with OxyContin maker Purdue and Sackler family

NEW YORK (AP) — A federal bankruptcy court judge on Friday said he will approve OxyContin-maker Purdue Pharma's latest deal to settle thousands of lawsuits over the toll of opioids that includes some money for thousands of victims of the epidemic. The deal overseen by U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Sean Lane would require members of the Sackler family who own the company to contribute up to \$7 billion over 15 years. The new agreement replaces one the U.S. Supreme Court rejected last year, finding it would have improperly protected members of the family against future lawsuits. The judge said he would explain his decision in a...

Study Finds Longer, More Consistent Addiction Medication Use Among Youth Sharply Lowers Risk of Overdose, Hospitalization

New research from Mass General Brigham finds that adolescents and young adults who stayed on the medication buprenorphine for at least a year had markedly lower risks of opioid overdose and hospitalization compared with peers who discontinued medication early or took it inconsistently. The results, published in Pediatrics, are especially relevant as youth overdose death rates recently reached record highs, driven by fentanyl. "We are commonly asked in youth addiction treatment how long to stay on medication and how strictly it must be taken to provide protection," said lead and corresponding author Scott Hadland, MD...

Starting opioid agonist treatment after hospitalization for toxicity halves risk of repeat event

A new study led by researchers at the University of Toronto's Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy and Unity Health Toronto shows that almost one-quarter of hospital-treated opioid toxicities experienced a repeat event within six months, but early initiation of opioid agonist therapy (OAT) can cut that risk almost in half. The research, published this week in *BMJ Public Health*, demonstrates the importance of connecting people who experience an opioid toxicity with community resources and treatment while they are in hospital. "When people who use drugs are in hospital, it may be one of their few touchpoints with the health care system, and...

Research reveals gaps in tracking opioid use among older adults in Medicare post-acute care

A new research letter published in *JAMA Health Forum* highlights major gaps in how opioid use is tracked among older adults receiving post-acute care under Medicare. Researchers found that Medicare Part D claims significantly underreport opioid dispensing for patients admitted to skilled nursing facilities after hospitalization—a shortcoming that may hinder effective pain management, patient safety monitoring, and health policy decisions. The analysis, titled "Opioid Exposure Measurement in Postacute Care Under Medicare Consolidated Payments," compared Medicare Part D prescription claims with records...

Reduced opioid use found after knee surgery with mini-scope technique

A new study led by Marshall University researchers found that patients who underwent knee surgery using a minimally invasive "needle arthroscopy" technique used significantly fewer opioids after surgery compared to those treated with standard arthroscopy. The study published in *The Journal of Orthopaedics* compared outcomes for patients undergoing a partial meniscectomy—a common procedure to repair torn knee cartilage—performed with a small, needle-sized scope to those treated with traditional instruments. Results showed that patients in the needle arthroscopy group experienced less pain in the first two weeks...

New bipartisan bill aims to boost non-opioid pain treatment for veterans

WASHINGTON, D.C. (WVVA) - U.S. Senators Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.) and Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.) today introduced the Non-Opioids Prevent Addiction in the Nation (NOPAIN) for Veterans Act, bipartisan legislation aimed at expanding veterans' access to non-opioid alternatives for pain management. This bill seeks to create pathways for FDA-approved non-opioid treatments to be included in the VA National Formulary (VANF), making them more readily available to veterans across all VA facilities. Senator Capito emphasized the importance of providing safe and effective pain management options. "Our veterans...

Neuromodulation for Treating Substance Use Disorders

While medications for addiction treatment (MAT) and behavioral therapies are the primary treatment options for substance use disorders (SUDs), neuromodulation interventions have emerged as promising new treatments. These non-invasive therapies use electrical, magnetic, or soundwave stimulation to alter the activity of neural circuits in the brain involved in reward and motivation and implicated in addiction (Oesterle et al., 2025). The goal is to directly influence brain function to reduce craving, improve self-control, and help reset the brain's reward pathways, which have been altered by repeated substance...

Dopamine desensitization in fruit flies shows how repeated actions lose appeal over time

Our brain's reward system processes and reinforces pleasurable experiences, motivating us to seek out and engage in rewarding activities ranging from eating to social interactions to recreational drug use. Dopamine plays an important role in this process, mediated by the D2 dopamine receptor (D2R). New research published in Nature Neuroscience finds that the same mechanism that causes drug addiction (desensitization of D2R) also controls the natural devaluation of repeated behaviors (e.g. seeking out the same thrill of going on a rollercoaster for the first time). This is the first natural use found for this mechanism. Researchers from Boston...

Unregulated and unsafe: Expert warns of risks in substance use reduction apps

In a commentary published by the Journal of the American Medical Association, researchers at Rutgers Health, Harvard University and the University of Pittsburgh discuss the impact of unregulated mobile health and generative artificial intelligence (AI) applications that claim to assist in substance use reduction. Jon-Patrick Allem, a member of the Rutgers Institute for Nicotine and Tobacco Studies, an associate professor at the Rutgers School of Public Health and senior author of the commentary, focuses on the need for greater oversight of new and untested technologies, such as mobile health and generative AI applications, and why...

Study Links Chronic Hep C to Risk of Deadly Cancer

Chronic hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection was associated with an increased risk of pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma (PDAC), according to a cohort study of more than 6 million U.S. veterans. Compared with no HCV infection, chronic HCV was associated with an increased risk of PDAC after adjusting for risk factors including smoking, alcohol use, diabetes, pancreatitis, and liver disease (adjusted HR 1.76, 95% CI 1.67-1.86), reported Louise Wang, MD, MSCE, of the Yale School of Medicine in New Haven, Connecticut, and colleagues. HCV exposure was also associated with an increased risk of PDAC (aHR 1.18, 95% CI 1.11-1.25), they noted...

Gambling Disorder in the Age of Mobile Sports Betting

Online gambling is a rapidly growing industry all over the world, affecting both adults and youth.¹ Sports betting is now legal in 38 US states and the District of

Columbia, and in 26 states, a person can now make a sports wager on the same device they use to text their therapist or check their social media feeds. Early data from problem-gambling helplines and state prevalence surveys suggest an increase in both gambling participation and help-seeking, with a disproportionate rise in jurisdictions that permit online betting.^{2,3} This circumstance presents a challenge—and opportunity—for health care in general and...

NIH Cuts Disrupted Hundreds of Clinical Trials, Study Finds

Hundreds of clinical trials and tens of thousands of participants were affected by NIH grant terminations earlier this year, a cross-sectional study indicated. Between February 28 and August 15, there were 11,008 clinical trials funded by NIH grants, and 383 of these trials (3.5%) subsequently lost funding, reported Anupam Jena, MD, PhD, of Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, and the National Bureau of Economic Research in Cambridge, and colleagues. They also showed that more than 74,000 patients were affected by grant funding disruptions, based on the number of active clinical trials, they reported...

Funding Opportunities



GRANTS & FUNDING

NIH Central Resource for Grants and Funding Information

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

CAR Member New Publications

Impact of a brief personally tailored opioid-overdose and medication for opioid use disorder education intervention on naloxone acceptance in peripartum individuals: A secondary exploratory analysis

Michelle R. Lofwall, Frankie Kropp, Jasmin Charles, Gerald Cochran, Antoine Douaihy, Mary Edwards, Daniel Lewis, Carmen Rosa, Jessica L. Young, T. John Winhusen

Journal of Substance Use and Addiction Treatment

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.josat.2025.209816>

ABSTRACT

Objectives: Despite drug overdose deaths increasing among peripartum persons, little is known about how to increase naloxone acceptance in this population. This study evaluated the effect of a brief 15-min computer facilitated personally-Tailored Opioid- overdose and Medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD) Educational intervention (TOME) on naloxone uptake and compared participant characteristics based on naloxone acceptance.

Methods: This secondary analysis is from an outpatient randomized multisite trial with peripartum individuals receiving MOUD treatment. Participants were randomized to TOME or control. TOME participants met 1:1 with research staff to review a printout of missed pre-test opioid overdose and MOUD knowledge questions that explained the correct answer. Control participants received educational materials from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Baseline demographics, treatment characteristics, opioid overdose and MOUD knowledge, and self-report MOUD stigma ratings were compared between participants who accepted versus declined free study-provided naloxone because they already had it or for other reasons. The intervention's effect on naloxone acceptance was evaluated after delivery of TOME or control among those accepting versus those declining naloxone for other reasons.

Results: Of 111 participants, 90 accepted naloxone, 14 declined due to already having naloxone, and seven declined for other reasons (e.g., not affiliating with people who would need it, not wanting it in their house, allergy). These three groups significantly differed on past stigma from family ($p = 0.007$) and employers ($p = 0.013$) whereby participants declining naloxone due to already having it had the lowest stigma. Those accepting naloxone ($n = 90$) were nearly evenly split between TOME ($n = 48$) and control ($n = 42$). Six of the seven declining naloxone for other reasons were control participants. Among the 97 accepting naloxone or declining it for other reasons, TOME trended toward increasing naloxone acceptance (OR: 6.857, CI: 0.793, 59.291, Fisher Exact test $p = 0.0592$). There was a higher percentage of correct MOUD answers in the 90 accepting naloxone (66.8 %) vs. the 7 declining for other reasons (55.7 %; $p = 0.0471$).

Conclusions: These preliminary results suggest the need for further work to determine if educational interventions can enhance naloxone acceptance and suggest that stigma and medication treatment knowledge may be important factors influencing naloxone acceptance.

Acute alcohol in prefrontal cortex is characterized by enhanced inhibition that transitions to excitation

Kathleen G. Bryant, David Swygart, Yuexi Yin, Meredith R. Bauer, Mitchell D. Morningstar, Nicholas M. Timme, William H. Barnett, Colleen E. McGonigle, Eric A. Engleman, Patrick L. Sheets, Christopher C. Laphs

iScience

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.isci.2025.112920>

Highlights

- Acute alcohol *ex vivo* enhances inhibitory currents
- Acute alcohol *in vivo* induces a biphasic response
- Immediate inhibition is followed by delayed excitation
- Specificity to *in vivo* preparations suggests involvement of network dynamics

Summary

Acute alcohol can have profound effects on the brain and behavior. Dorsal medial prefrontal cortex (dmPFC) function is especially sensitive to disruption from acute alcohol exposure. The acute, broadly inhibitory pharmacodynamics of alcohol in dmPFC have been well characterized in in vitro and ex vivo preparations, but seemingly contradict the stimulatory behavioral effects of alcohol at low-to-moderate doses. To determine the effects of acute alcohol on dmPFC activity, this study combined multiple routes of alcohol exposure across multiple rodent species and preparations and utilized modeling techniques to make direct predictions about brain ethanol concentrations. These findings revealed that the acute effects of alcohol on dmPFC are actually biphasic in nature, such that broad reductions in activity are immediately followed by broad increases in neural activity. Notably, these increases in neural activity were only observed in in vivo preparations, suggesting that network engagement and exposure route may be critical.

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