

UC CAR Weekly Newsletter 12.12.2025

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

### **CoM Office of Research Gallery of Awardees**

Recognizing the challenges of competing for funding to support faculty research programs, the College of Medicine Office of Research celebrates researchers in the Gallery of Awardees. The gallery honors those faculty members who have been awarded external grants of \$100,000 per year or more direct costs and recently featured **Dr. T. John Winhusen, PhD, CAR Director**, Vice Chair of Addiction Sciences, Donald C. Harrison Endowed Chair in Medicine, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience.

Award: National Institute on Drug Abuse Award

Project Title: The Ohio Valley Node of the Clinical Trials Network

Project Period: 3/1/2025-2/29/2032

Award Amount: \$12,850,198.00

Summary: The Ohio Valley Node (OVN) joined NIDA's Clinical Trials Network (CTN) in September of 2000 as one of the CTN's second wave of awardees and has been funded continuously since then. Funds in the current 7-year award cycle (3/1/2025 - 2/29/2032) support OVN infrastructure, project development, and support to all OVN performance sites.

### **Ohio's new THC ban could 'wipe out an entire industry,' brewery says**

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Ohio brewers fear the state's new 'intoxicating' hemp ban will kill the buzz of the booming THC-infused drink industry. While the drinks poured, brewery Urban Artifact's Scotty Hunter watched the clock tick. "It's really impacted our business quite a bit more than I would have expected," Hunter said. The Cincinnati business sells THC-infused beverages, drinks that have driven profits. "We have improved our revenue by 30% two years in a row," he said. "We've added jobs." But recent decisions by Ohio politicians are leaving him high and dry. Well, just dry — not high. "We saw about a 50% drop in our sales in the...

### **Bill would require hospitals to distribute overdose reversal drugs to certain patients**

COLUMBUS, Ohio (WCMH) – An Ohio lawmaker is working to mandate the distribution of overdose reversal drugs at what he called the "frontline of the opioid addiction crisis:" hospitals. Senate Bill 137, sponsored by Sen. Terry Johnson (R-McDermott), would require hospitals to provide overdose reversal drugs, such as naloxone, upon discharge to patients who displayed one or more symptoms of an opioid addiction or overdose. The legislation gives a few exceptions, such as if the patient refuses to accept the drug or if the patient's practitioner has determined providing the drug is not appropriate. Under the proposal...

### **Did Ohio's THC reform just create a bunch of new crimes?**

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Ohio lawmakers have sent a bill changing marijuana policy to Gov. Mike DeWine's desk, creating a slew of new criminal offenses, such as buying weed in Michigan to smoking in a public area. It's taken years, but finally, recreational marijuana policy is heading to the finish line. This was an effort by the Republicans to "make changes" to the legislation to make it "better," lawmakers have continued to say. In November of 2023, 57% of Ohioans voted yes on Issue 2: the legalization of recreational cannabis. "This bill leaves the crux of Issue 2 and marijuana access intact while providing for several important public safety...

### **Lucas County program chooses rehabilitation over punishment for addiction-related crimes**

TOLEDO, Ohio (WTVG) - The sound of applause fills Judge Ian English's courtroom, but these aren't celebrations of guilty verdicts. Every clap means someone is accepted into the drug treatment program and has chosen recovery over jail time. Brett Crabtree, a drug court client, explains why he wants to get sober. "I've been to prison a few times. Come back out and always use. So I figure maybe trying a little something different might help me out upon my release," Crabtree said. Lucas County established its drug court in 2016. The program treats people whose addictions led to criminal charges. The program chooses rehabilitation...

### **11 Charged in Multi-state Fentanyl, Meth, and Cocaine Trafficking Operation**

CLEVELAND – The U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Northern District of Ohio announced the unsealing of a federal indictment Dec. 3 charging 11 people allegedly involved in connection with a drug trafficking organization operating in Cuyahoga County. According to the indictment, from about August 2023 to April 2024, members of the conspiracy are accused of supplying and/or distributing controlled substances that included fentanyl, oxycodone, and alprazolam pills, as well as methamphetamine and cocaine. Conspiracy members operated throughout Greater Cleveland, with a significant amount of illegal activity taking place at...

### **Two Appalachian states bound by one epidemic take different paths forward**

The opioid epidemic has quietly shaped daily life across Appalachia for decades. Although addiction touches every corner of the U.S., the burden in Appalachia is heavier and more persistent. At the start of the 2000s, overdose death rates in Appalachian counties mirrored the rest of the nation. By 2017, those same counties saw overdose death rates 72% higher than non-Appalachian areas, according to the 2019 Opioids in Appalachia report by the National Association of Counties and the Appalachian Regional Commission. This crisis took root decades earlier, as the presence of prescription painkillers surged in rural...

## **National News**

### **Research strengthens evidence linking alcohol use to cancer**

As Americans gear up for the holiday season, new research offers a timely reminder to reflect on the long-term health effects of raising a celebratory glass—or two. Alcohol is known to increase the risk of several cancers even at moderate levels. Yet drinking remains widespread, and important questions persist about how both the frequency and amount of alcohol people consume shape their cancer risk. Moreover, risks differ across groups, and existing alcohol policies rarely emphasize their link to cancer. To help close these critical gaps, researchers from Florida Atlantic University's Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine, conducted a...

### **Study finds increase in risk of binge drinking among 12th-graders who use two or more cannabis products**

The cannabis marketplace continues to grow and evolve, offering consumers new ways to use cannabis—and new ways to combine it with other substances, such as alcohol. That practice can be particularly detrimental to adolescents, who are known to use both substances in high numbers. When it comes to cannabis use and binge drinking among high school seniors, modality matters, according to new research from the University at Buffalo, which finds that differing modes of cannabis consumption may be associated with risky alcohol use behaviors in this population. The study is among the first to evaluate...

### **Exposure to neighborhood violence leads some Denver teens to use tobacco and alcohol earlier, new study shows**

High levels of neighborhood violence increase the risk of Latino and African American teens in Denver starting to use alcohol and tobacco, according to our recent study. In the U.S., approximately 2 in 10 adolescents between the ages of 12 and 20 drink alcohol. About 1 in 10 smoke cigarettes. For teens living in neighborhoods with high levels of disadvantage and social disorganization, the odds are 35% to 72% higher. Disadvantaged neighborhoods generally have higher levels of economic hardship, poorer educational opportunities and limited resources. Those factors weaken the social fabric of a community. Although...

### **Holiday season sees spike in impaired driving—alcohol isn't the only culprit, expert says**

December is one of the deadliest months for impaired driving; and according to data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in 2022, December drunken driving rates were at their highest in 15 years. Miguel Perez, head of the Department of Biomedical Engineering and Mechanics at Virginia Tech, said that despite efforts to reduce impaired driving, it is "still very much a problem." And now, the problem extends beyond just alcohol. "Impaired crashes are increasingly being tied to cannabis and other drugs, which is important because our policing and detection approaches are limited for non-alcohol impairment," Perez...

### **Rats may seek cannabis to cope with stress**

It isn't just people—when given the chance, rats may also use cannabis to cope with stress, according to a study by researchers at Washington State University. Published in the journal *Neuropsychopharmacology*, the study was designed to examine cannabis-seeking behavior and found that rats with higher natural stress levels are far more likely to self-administer the popular recreational drug. "We ran rats through this extensive battery of behavioral and biological tests, and what we found was that when we look at all of these different factors and all the variables that we measured, stress levels seem to matter the most when it comes..."

### **Medical cannabis linked to reduced opioid use in adults with chronic pain**

Adults with chronic pain who participated in New York State's (NYS) Medical Cannabis Program were significantly less likely to require prescription opioids, according to a new study published in *JAMA Internal Medicine* and led by researchers at Albert Einstein College of Medicine and Montefiore Health System. "Chronic pain and opioid addiction are two of the most pressing health challenges in the United States," said Deepika E. Slawek, M.D., M.S., the study's lead author, associate professor of medicine at Einstein, and an internal medicine and addiction medicine specialist at Montefiore. "Our findings indicate that medical cannabis..."

## **Old habits die hard: Study shows most young nicotine, cannabis users are still lighting up**

Young Americans use nicotine, tobacco and cannabis in multiple ways, but smoking those items—the most dangerous method—is still involved for most users, a new University of Michigan study found. The research is important because using any type of nicotine, tobacco or cannabis product is harmful to young people, says lead investigator Rebecca Evans-Polce, U-M research associate professor of nursing. Understanding the types of products they use most, and if and how they're used together, can help develop better interventions, she says. The study used 2022–23 data from 8,722 individuals aged 12–34 in the Population...

## **Abstinent smokers more sensitive to pain due to neural changes, finds study**

Abstinent smokers experience increased pain sensitivity during withdrawal, to the point that they often require more pain relief after surgery. Why? New from JNeurosci, Zhijie Lu, from Fudan University Minhang Hospital, and Kai Wei, from Shanghai Eastern Hepatobiliary Surgery Hospital, led a team of researchers to explore brain activity linking nicotine withdrawal and pain sensitivity. The researchers found that 30 abstinent smokers had altered functioning of specific brain areas, increased pain sensitivity, and a need for more postoperative pain relief—particularly with opioids—compared to 30 nonsmokers. The...

## **Quitting smoking completely is best way to protect your health, study shows**

New research from Johns Hopkins Medicine adds to existing evidence that smoking fewer cigarettes does not eliminate cardiovascular disease risk, and quitting entirely is the most effective strategy for improving health. Cigarette smoking is the leading preventable cause of disease, death and disability in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, over 16 million Americans are living with a smoking-related disease, making cigarette smoking a major public health concern. In an effort to further address this issue, researchers sought to demonstrate the relationships among smoking burden...

## **What West Virginia teens lost when CDC cuts ended their fight against Big Tobacco**

Breanna Cutright was getting her nails painted purple for junior prom when the email arrived on her phone with bad news. Raze, an anti-tobacco program focused on young people across West Virginia, was shutting down because of federal funding cuts. “I was trying not to cry,” said Cutright, now an 18-year-old high school senior in the historic coal mining town of Clarksburg, W.Va. She felt panicked — Raze had opened up her world ever since she first got involved in middle school, giving her access to scholarship opportunities, trips to the West Virginia State Capitol in Charleston each fall to bond with other young people involved...

## **Dual use of cigarettes and vapes can reduce risks of smoking and help smokers quit, study finds**

A new major study from Queen Mary University of London has found that smokers who use both cigarettes and e-cigarettes at the same time—known as dual use—are reducing their intake of harmful chemicals and are also more likely to eventually quit smoking than those who continue to smoke only. This challenges common fears about dual use. The study examined data from a large trial, which followed 886 adult smokers over one year. Participants were offered e-cigarettes or nicotine replacement products as part of a stop-smoking attempt. Published in *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*, the research looked closely...

## **Light-based brain therapy shows promise in cutting opioid cravings and relapse**

Washington State University researchers have discovered how a neural circuit—or a connection between two brain regions—drives relapse after opioid use, a finding that could lead to more effective treatments for opioid use disorders. In a study published in the *Journal of Neuroscience*, researchers in the Department of Integrative Physiology and Neuroscience at WSU's College of Veterinary Medicine used a preclinical model to model opioid use in humans and found that reducing the activity within a specific neuronal circuit linking the prelimbic cortex and the paraventricular thalamus significantly reduced drug-seeking...

## **Opioids: Clarifying the concept of safe supply to save lives**

In Canada, thousands of people use contaminated street opioids. To reduce overdoses, the country has been experimenting for the past 10 years with the distribution of pharmaceutical opioids as an alternative to illicit drugs. This method is often referred to as "safe supply" or "safer supply." What exactly do these terms, which emerged in the late 2010s and are central to Canadian harm reduction policies, mean? In a study published in the *International Journal of Drug Policy*, a research team led by Université de Montréal professors Dr. Julie Bruneau and Sarah Larney provide some answers. With the help of the study's first author, Uyen...

## **Addiction Policy Forum Webinar: Understanding 7-OH – Science, Risks, and Real-World Impact**

**Tuesday, December 16 – 1:00 PM – 2:30 PM**

7-hydroxymitragynine (7-OH), a compound found in kratom, has drawn increasing attention from researchers, clinicians, and advocates due to its potent effects and emerging risks. While some have raised concerns about its potential for misuse and health consequences, there is limited understanding in the field about how 7-OH works in the body and how it affects individuals and communities. These uncertainties create challenges for both public health and policy, as stakeholders seek to balance science, treatment, and lived experience. This webinar will provide an in-depth exploration of 7-OH, combining the latest research with a firsthand perspective. Experts will review what is currently known about the pharmacology

and risks of 7-OH, alongside personal insight. A moderated discussion will give participants the opportunity to engage with the panel and better understand the implications of this emerging issue.

### **Is addiction the next frontier for GLP-1 receptor agonists?**

Glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor agonists (GLP-1RAs) have revolutionized the treatment of obesity and type 2 diabetes. Medicines such as semaglutide (Ozempic and Wegovy) and tirzepatide (Mounjaro/Zepbound) are remarkably effective at inducing substantial weight loss and improving markers of metabolic health. In addition to their metabolic effects, these medications act on other organs, including the kidney, liver and cardiovascular system. Buoyed by these results researchers started looking at whether GLP-1RAs might also act on the brain. Retrospective studies suggested that semaglutide might have disease-modifying...

### **How Words Perpetuate Stigma Surrounding Addiction**

Based on the most recent statistics from the 2024 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 48.4 million Americans (16.8%) aged 12 and older were diagnosed with a substance use disorder (SUD) in the past year. This includes both alcohol and drug use disorders (9.7% and 9.8%, respectively). Of the individuals with SUD, 1 in 5, or 19% received treatment for substance use, and only 2.5% of those with alcohol use disorder received evidence-based treatment with medication for alcohol use disorder in the past year.<sup>1,2</sup> For comparison-sake, think of this through the lens of say diabetes, inclusive of prediabetes; of the 11.6% and...

### **The hidden toll of substance use disorder: Annual cost of lost productivity to US economy nearly \$93 billion**

A new study shows that in 2023, substance use disorders led to nearly \$93 billion in lost productivity in the United States from missed work, reduced job performance, inability to work, and lost household productivity. The novel analysis appearing in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, highlights the need for prevention and treatment strategies to reduce harm and costs. "Substance use disorders can impair cognitive and behavioral functioning, resulting in productivity losses," said the team of investigators from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "While medical costs and premature deaths associated with..."

## Funding Opportunities



### GRANTS & FUNDING

NIH Central Resource for Grants and Funding Information

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

#### **UC Foundation Funding Opportunity**

Please contact Carol Russell at (513) 556-6169 or [russecg@foundation.uc.edu](mailto:russecg@foundation.uc.edu) at **least 5 business days before the deadline**, prior to applying to the below opportunity, to ensure coordination and to facilitate assistance with approaches.

#### **Klingenstein Philanthropies Invites Fellowship Applications in Neuroscience**

**Deadline: February 1, 2026**

Klingenstein Philanthropies invites applications for the Klingenstein Fellowship Awards in Neuroscience. Awardees will receive \$450,000 (\$150,000 per year for three years) which may be used for salary support, research assistants, equipment, or for any other purpose that promotes the scientific activities of the fellow. The award is for the exclusive use by the fellow and may not be used for institutional or departmental support. The purpose of the award is to support innovative research by early career investigators. Research should have relevance for understanding the mechanisms underlying neurological and behavioral disorders that may lead to improvements in the diagnosis and treatment of these disorders. The organization recognizes, however, that some of the most important contributions toward disease cures can come from basic research, without an immediate understanding of their relationship to disease, so it also supports basic research. Several areas within neuroscience are of particular interest: Cellular and molecular neuroscience: Studies of the mechanisms of neuronal excitability and development, and of the genetic basis of behavior, Neural systems: Studies of the integrative function of the nervous system, Translational research: Studies to improve our understanding of the causes, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of neurological and psychiatric disorders. Priority will be given to candidates who may not have received substantial funding from other private awards yet have highly promising scientific careers. Neuroscientists from underrepresented and minoritized groups are encouraged to apply. To be eligible, investigators must hold a PhD and/or an MD, and have completed all research training, including post-doctoral training.

