

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**

#### **Children exposed to gambling mechanics before they understand money**

Gambling-style mechanics are becoming a routine part of children's digital lives, appearing in online games, mobile apps and even sports betting advertisements that surround popular media. University of Cincinnati experts warned in a recent WKRC-TV Local 12 report that long before children understand the value of money, they are learning the emotional highs and lows associated with risk. Online games, such as Roblox and Fortnite, offer fast-paced rewards that can keep children glued to screens. Inside those games, spending real money doesn't always feel real. Some parents say the pressure to spend is constant. Some...

#### **Our Street Medicine team hits the road to care for unhoused patients**

Care begins with trust. Nowhere is that more evident than in UC Health's Street Medicine program, where a multidisciplinary team delivers care directly to individuals experiencing homelessness throughout our community. Not everyone has the ability, resources, or trust to walk into a medical facility. UC Health is committed to serving all patients, and that means going TO unhoused patients where possible. The Cincinnati Street Medicine program brings compassionate, multidisciplinary healthcare directly to people experiencing homelessness in Cincinnati. Through a new mobile medical clinic in a fully equipped van, to our...

## **Ohio activists approved to start collecting signatures to repeal ban on hemp, restrictions to marijuana**

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Ohio activists are cleared to start collecting signatures to repeal a state law that added more criminal penalties to marijuana usage and totally banned "intoxicating" hemp products. After originally rejecting the petition for some factual errors and mistakes, Attorney General Dave Yost has certified the latest draft of a proposed referendum petition on Senate Bill 56. This allows THC supporters to begin their effort of collecting the nearly 250,000 signatures needed to put the question to the voters. "Full steam ahead. We're going to be hitting the streets, collecting signatures all across Ohio because people are angry and...

## **MERIT court program helps individuals move past drug-related issues**

The bare statistics weave a morbid tale. Preventable drug overdose deaths in the United States, since 1999, have jumped 792 percent. According to national statistics, the overdose rate is 21.6 deaths per 100,000 residents. From the epidemic of painkiller addiction in the early 2000s, to the resurgence of heroin addiction in the 2010s, and the invasion of fentanyl and synthetic drugs in the 2020s, the resulting addiction has left a trail of death, ruined lives, and broken families in its wake. The problem exists in every community, from big cities to rural towns. Mount Vernon is no different, except for one thing: Mount Vernon is finding...

## **National News**

### **Pain and recreational drug use stand out as potent triggers for late alcohol use disorder relapse**

Alcohol use disorder (AUD) is one of the leading causes of preventable death in the United States and worldwide, and leads to substantial disease and medical complications. While treatments are available that can help patients with this disorder achieve stability and initial remission, relapses are common as people grapple with the demands of recovery. While relapses that occur early in the AUD recovery process are often tied to cue reactivity (trigger-driven urges) and neurophysiological instability (temporary brain and body imbalance after alcohol use stops), little is known about what drives long-term relapses (LTR): setbacks...

### **Inadequate nutrition and lower education linked to worse outcomes for children exposed to alcohol in utero**

A new study addresses the puzzle of why heavy drinking throughout pregnancy leads to widely varying outcomes for children. Even in the context of heavy and consistent prenatal alcohol exposure (PAE), children may be severely affected, less affected, or seemingly not affected at all. Some of the variation can be explained by the quantity, frequency, and gestational timing of drinking during pregnancy, and genetic variations affecting mothers' alcohol metabolism. For the study published in *Alcohol: Clinical and Experimental Research*, investigators aimed to define the range of physical, cognitive, and behavioral outcomes...

### **Peer-support groups tied to fewer relapses after alcohol dependence treatment**

Participating in peer-support recovery groups is associated with ongoing abstinence among Japanese men following treatment for alcohol dependence (AD). But smoking and consuming non-alcoholic beer are linked to drinking and relapse, according to a new study. Japanese people are genetically and ethnically less prone to AD compared to many Western populations. The downside: in Japan's permissive drinking culture, where understanding of AD is limited, alcohol use disorder is highly stigmatized, and seeking professional treatment is unusual. For the study published in *Alcohol: Clinical and Experimental Research*...

### **Should medical marijuana be less stringently regulated? A drug policy expert explains what's at stake**

Medical marijuana could soon be reclassified into a medical category that includes prescription drugs like Tylenol with codeine, ketamine and anabolic steroids. That's because in December 2025, President Donald Trump signed an executive order to reschedule marijuana to a less restricted category, continuing a process initiated by President Joe Biden in 2022. Currently, marijuana is in the most restrictive class, Schedule I, the same category as street drugs like LSD, ecstasy and heroin. For years, many researchers and medical experts have argued that its current classification is a hindrance to much-needed medical...

### **Study Finds Quitting Smoking is Associated with Improved Recovery from Other Substance Use Disorders**

Findings from a National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) study show that quitting cigarette smoking is associated with improved recovery outcomes from other substance use disorders. Using data from more than 2,600 adults participating in the Population Assessment of Tobacco and Health (PATH) Study, a nationally representative study funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, researchers examined changes in smoking status and recovery outcomes over a four-year period. The analysis found that individuals who quit smoking had 42% greater odds of being in sustained...

### **Nicotine pouches may help smokers quit, but pose addictive risks for young people**

Nicotine pouches are rising in popularity as an alternative for tobacco users to help quit smoking. But the new product is drawing in younger people with no smoking history, complicating the benefits and costs of its use. Pouches are small microfiber containers that people place between their gums and cheeks to absorb the addictive chemical nicotine. The pouches are almost entirely nicotine, so users aren't absorbing the other harmful chemicals found in products like cigarettes or chew. Dr. Hasmeena Kathuria directs the Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She's also...

### **ACF Expands Access to Medications for Opioid Use Disorder for At-Risk Families**

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through its Administration for Children and Families (ACF) today announced that three U.S. Food and Drug Administration-approved Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) have been added as prevention services eligible for funding under Title IV-E, which supports children and families involved with the child welfare system. States and tribes can now receive a 50 percent federal match to provide buprenorphine, methadone, and naltrexone to parents when children are at imminent risk of entering foster care but can remain safely in the home or in a kinship placement with...

### **Before crisis strikes—smartwatch tracks triggers for opioid misuse**

Opioid overdoses continue to take a devastating toll across the United States. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2023, the nation recorded roughly 105,000 drug overdose deaths overall, with nearly 80,000 deaths involving opioids. Worldwide, opioids are also responsible for the majority of drug-related deaths. A University of California San Diego study published in *Nature Mental Health* is working on a potentially life-saving measure that may be as simple as strapping on a smartwatch. Researchers have long known that people living with chronic pain and long-term opioid prescriptions...

### **Fentanyl is changing how doctors treat opioid use disorder**

For years, buprenorphine—one of the primary medications used to treat opioid use disorder—has been a critical bridge to recovery, helping to reduce illicit drug use and overdose deaths. But with the changing landscape of the illicit drug market, particularly the rise of the potent synthetic opioid fentanyl, health care providers have found that traditional treatment protocols aren't as effective as they used to be. A new national survey, led by researchers at the Penn State College of Medicine and the University of Pittsburgh, found that nearly three-quarters of clinicians encountered significant obstacles when starting...

### **Methadone: Public transit is a barrier for accessing treatment**

In a new study published in *JAMA Network Open*, Yale researchers examined the burdens for people who use public transit to access methadone treatment for opioid use disorder (OUD) at Opioid Treatment Programs (OTPs) in Connecticut. While previous work has demonstrated long drive times for people using personal vehicles, these analyses did not include travel by public transit, a method of transportation used by many people who need methadone treatment. "Not accounting for public transit access ignores transportation barriers for many people trying to access the lifesaving medication," says Benjamin Howell, MD, MPH...

### **Methadone treatment for opioid use is rising, but better access is needed to reach more in need**

Methadone treatment for opioid use—which cuts the risk of death by overdose in half—among individuals insured by Medicaid-insured increased substantially after

2010, according to a new Penn Medicine analysis. But researchers say that since as few as a quarter of people with opioid use disorder receive medication treatment, the study highlights a need for expanded access. The research is published in JAMA Health Forum. "These medications allow people to focus on rebuilding their lives: Finding housing, reconnecting with family, working, and managing other health conditions," said the study's co-author, Ashish Thakrar, MD...

### **“Unlocking Insights” challenge winners show value of All of Us dataset for addiction science**

The NIH's All of Us Research Program is a landmark effort that has built one of the largest and most comprehensive health databases in history. With more than 870,000 participants from all 50 states across the United States, All of Us brings together electronic health records, surveys, biospecimens, wearable data, genomic information, and physical measurements. Designed as an open, secure resource for registered researchers, All of Us reflects real-world variability that has long been missing from biomedical research, including of the fullest possible range of factors like ancestry, geography, age, and lived experience. Because...

### **Demand grows for doulas who can help moms with addiction**

"Don't give me narcotics." Emmalee Hortin, a doula, recalled one of her clients delivering that message to hospital staff. Doctors were operating on the woman to clear tissue after a miscarriage. But despite her patient's pleas, clinicians still administered fentanyl via IV to manage pain, Hortin said. Her client had substance use disorder and had been working toward recovery. "She was really, really upset," Hortin said. "She actually was really worried about returning to use, and so was her husband." Hortin is a doula trained in supporting pregnant and postpartum moms with substance use disorder—a role in increasing...

### **Neighborhood violence linked to higher substance use among one in four US teens**

One in four U.S. adolescents is exposed to violence in their neighborhood, and those teens are more than twice as likely to use cigarettes, alcohol, or drugs to cope, according to a new study from the University of Texas at Arlington. Published in the Journal of Affective Disorders, the study was led by UT Arlington School of Social Work Professor Philip Baiden and drew on national data from the 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey. Researchers analyzed responses from 20,005 adolescents ages 12 to 18, offering new insights into early pathways to substance use, a persistent public health concern. "Our study reminds us that violence is...

### **Family dinners may reduce substance-use risk for many adolescents**

A new study by researchers at Tufts University School of Medicine finds that regular family dinners may help prevent substance use for a majority of U.S. adolescents, but suggests that the strategy is not effective for youth who have experienced significant childhood adversity. The findings provide important insights for

practitioners looking to help families prevent substance use, as well as for researchers aiming to develop interventions that better account for adolescents' unique experiences. For the study, published in the Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma, researchers analyzed online survey data from 2,090 U.S....

### **Kratom 7-OH: What to Know About this Powerful Compound**

You might have seen kratom products in a gas station, vitamin shop, or a “CBD Kratom” store. Kratom is a plant originally from Southeast Asia that has gained attention for its alleged ability to increase energy, relieve pain, and help with mental health, though it has not been approved for any medical use. Of even greater concern is a version called kratom 7-OH that’s much more serious and potentially dangerous. Let’s break down what it is, why it’s different from “normal” kratom, and why it’s important to be aware of it. While some people use regular kratom for energy or pain relief, kratom 7-OH is a different story. 7-OH (also...

### **Trump signs executive order on combating substance addiction**

President Trump signed an executive order aimed at combating drug addiction and substance abuse on Thursday, dubbing it “the Great American Recovery Initiative.” The initiative directs federal agencies to use grant funds to support addiction recovery and increase awareness surrounding addiction. The effort will also help agencies consolidate a number of programs including those pertaining to drug prevention, treatment and recovery support. “Now we’re taking a bold action to help Americans struggling with all forms of addiction so that they can get the help and the support they need so that they can free...

### **RFK Jr. and others launch new addiction and homelessness initiative**

NEW YORK (AP) — Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. on Monday announced that his department will devote \$100 million toward a pilot program addressing homelessness and substance abuse in eight cities, building on an executive order President Donald Trump signed last week related to addiction. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services will also make faith-based organizations eligible for addiction-related grants and expand states' ability to use federal health funding for substance abuse treatment in certain situations involving children, Kennedy said at an annual "Prevention Day" event for the Substance...

## **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

### **Exploring the use of telemedicine to expand addiction and recovery resources in Great Plains Tribal Communities**

Michael C. Harding MD, MPH, Anna C. Kihlstrom MPH, Allison Kelliher MD, Carmen Rosa MS, Frankie B. Kropp MS, T. John Winhusen PhD, Donald K. Warne MD, MPH

*Journal of Rural Health*

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#### **ABSTRACT**

**Purpose:** Addressing substance use disorders remains a high priority for many Indigenous communities. Opioid misuse and deaths related to overdose have been increasing sharply in American Indian/Alaska Native populations. Medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) remain difficult to access in Great Plains Tribal Communities due to the paucity of treatment providers, among other factors. The present study explores the perceived barriers and facilitators to using telehealth to promote access to MOUD and recovery resources in Great Plains Tribal Communities.

**Methods:** This study employed qualitative methods to review policy considerations for using telemedicine to provide buprenorphine. We obtained qualitative data from 5 interviews with 8 total key informants (62.5% women, 25% with tribal affiliations) with local administrators, health care providers, and policymakers. Their responses were transcribed and coded with NVivo software.

**Findings:** After coding and analysis, 6 themes emerged: current access, acceptability in Tribal Communities, facilitators, barriers, payment considerations, and policies that support tele-MOUD. Participant responses—though specific to Great Plains Tribal Communities—mirrored other recommendations on telemedicine and substance use disorder services such as federal support of reciprocity of state licenses, permanent codification of the regulatory changes enacted during the COVID-19 public health emergency, increased funding for innovative delivery of services, and considerations of privacy; the need for culture- and trauma-informed providers was also noted.

**Conclusions:** Telemedicine for the provision of MOUD appears, from this qualitative analysis, to be a feasible way to expand access to care for opioid use disorder in Great Plains Tribal Communities.

