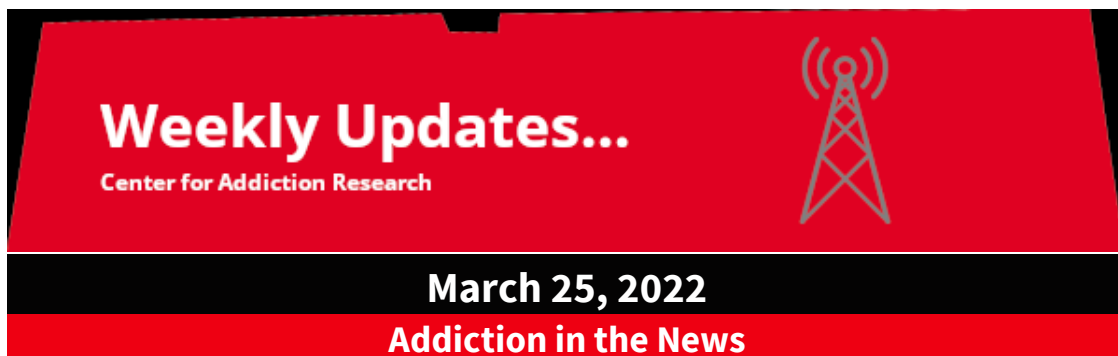


Welcome to the weekly newsletter from the Center for Addiction Research! Each newsletter includes highlights from addiction in the news topics, active funding opportunities offered by NIDA/NIAAA, and information about any new publications from CAR members. Please email Jen Rowe (roweji@ucmail.uc.edu)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

UC professor reviews origins of US drug policy, proposes strategies to help end opioid epidemic

In his work as a pain management pharmacist, Dan Arendt has seen some of his patients stigmatized as “drug seekers” or blamed for their use of opioids rather than being acknowledged as a person who is suffering from a severely painful condition. Arendt said these stigmatizing judgments are not reserved only for his pain patients. In fact, he argues that the stigma surrounding opioids is negatively affecting both patients...

Kentucky Secures Federal Funding To Address Overdose Deaths.

[WYMT-TV](#) Hazard, KY (3/21, 50K) reports a Kentucky lawmaker “secured federal funds to address skyrocketing overdose death rates as part of a federal funding package for the remainder of 2022.” Almost “2,000 Kentuckians died as a result of opioid overdoses in 2020, the highest number in state history,” according to the Kentucky Office of Drug Control Policy.” Now, “a Community Project Funding earmark totaling \$500,000 for Operation UNITE will help the organization continue its drug abuse prevention programs across Southern and Eastern Kentucky.” The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration is mentioned.

Kentucky County Sees Spike In Overdoses.

[WLEX-TV](#) Lexington, KY (3/21, 114K) reports, “In Lee County,” Kentucky “six deaths and 21 overdoses in just three weeks have been reported,” and “these troubling numbers for March are part of a larger trend in the county.” Some “first responders

say they believe it's a dangerous combination of fentanyl and methamphetamine that's causing this dramatic spike in drug overdoses."

Three Charged in Drug Trafficking Conspiracy that Distributed Over 1,100 Pounds of Cocaine in the Cleveland Area

Federal law enforcement officials today announced the arrest of three men charged in a 30-count indictment for their roles in a drug trafficking conspiracy that is alleged to have brought over 500 kilograms, or approximately 1,100 pounds, of cocaine from Mexico to be redistributed in the Cleveland area. "Drug trafficking organizations target communities like Cleveland because they mistakenly assume nobody is paying..."

National News

Researchers Hope To Advance Trial Of Skin Graft Procedure To Treat Alcohol, Cocaine Addiction.

The [New York Post](#) (3/15, Sparks, 7.45M) reports researchers at the University of Chicago are seeking Food and Drug Administration approval to start human trials for a skin graft treatment for cocaine and alcohol addiction. Researchers have already treated mice using the method, which uses gene editing techniques to make a graft "designed to regulate dopamine spikes against alcohol cravings or produce an enzyme that blocks the effects of cocaine." According to the Post, the treatment "holds promise for addicts with a history of relapse."

Study Raises Questions About Risks Of Using Medical Marijuana For Mood And Anxiety Disorders.

[CNN](#) (3/18, LaMotte, 89.21M) reported that new research indicates that "people with pain, anxiety or depression who obtain medical marijuana cards may overuse marijuana within a short time frame, leading to cannabis use disorder while failing to improve their symptoms." The study found that those "who obtained medical marijuana cards immediately were twice as likely to develop cannabis use disorder than those who waited 12 weeks before getting cards." Participants "who got cards immediately saw 'no significant changes in pain severity or anxiety or depressive symptoms' but did report improvement in insomnia and greater well-being, according to the study." The [findings](#) were published in JAMA Network. The National Institute on Drug Abuse is mentioned.

Additional Sources. [HealthDay](#) (3/18, Reinberg, 11K) reported that "using medical marijuana to treat pain, anxiety or depression may quickly lead to dependence, without relieving symptoms," according to researchers. The study indicated that "after 12 weeks, 10% of the group with cards had developed a dependence on marijuana," and "that percentage doubled to 20% for those using marijuana to treat anxiety or depression."

Monitoring The Future Survey Finds Vaping Is Causing Teen Nicotine Addiction.

The [Boston Globe](#) (3/22, Lazar, 1.04M) reports new research from the University of Michigan's annual Monitoring the Future survey "indicates teens are increasingly struggling with nicotine addiction, largely from vaping e-cigarettes." The findings come "at a pivotal time in nicotine regulation," shortly after the FDA was granted "explicit authority over synthetic nicotine, which is made in a laboratory and is increasingly used in e-cigarettes, particularly sweet and fruit-flavored products popular with young people."

[US News & World Report](#) (3/22, Johnson, 1.91M) reports the research found 5.74% of adolescents "reported at least one unsuccessful attempt at quitting either electronic or combustible cigarettes" in 2020, the "highest prevalence of failed attempts in more than a decade, or since 2006."

The [Daily Mail \(UK\)](#) (3/22, Ely, 4.11M) reports researchers "say the proportion of teens who failed to kick the habit rose in 2020, bucking the declining trend seen since the late 1990s." Meanwhile, "separate analysis delving into vaping quit attempts revealed failure rates were twice as high, compared to those for traditional cigarettes."

Columnist Describes Newspaper Record Of 14-Year-Old Suffering Nicotine Poisoning.

In the [Knoxville \(TN\) News Sentinel](#) (3/22, 379K), guest columnist Robert Booker writes, "We often hear of people who overdose using drugs and we hear of college fraternities being accused of hazing by urging their pledges to drink too much alcohol, but the Daily Tribune of Feb. 15, 1882, tells of a very different substance abuse that we may not think of as toxic." According to Booker, the Tribune reported that Parham Adams, 14, might be dying from nicotine poisoning after smoking forty cigarettes for a wager.

Funding To Address Deadly Opioid Epidemic Is Only Half The Battle According To Addiction Professionals.

[KFYR-TV Bismarck, ND](#) (3/16, Craven, 98K) reports overdose deaths "are on the rise" in Bismarck, North Dakota and "officials say this is likely due to the increased prevalence of fentanyl, where a lethal dose can be as small as 2,000 micrograms – the size of a few grains of sand." The article says, "About 10 percent of patients taking opioids for chronic pain develop an opioid use disorder, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse." Officials urge expansion of programs that make medication-assisted treatments available, as well as building up the treatment workforce. To aid this effort, "\$25.6 million in federal funds from the U.S. Department of Health have been set aside to make medication-assisted treatments more widely available by 2025."

Suburban America Grappling With Drug Use More Than Ever Before.

The [Scripps](#) (3/15, Grossman) reports that some of the popular shows streaming during the pandemic, "like the popular HBO show Euphoria, which released its

second season in early January, have confronted uncomfortable topics like drug use.” Steve Carleton, executive director of Gallus Medical Detox Center, “says the one thing Euphoria does that others do not is it removes the stigma that drug use is only happening among certain demographics – mainly poor, young men in the streets.” National Institute on Drug Abuse Director Dr. Nora Volkow “says what these shows do is act as a catalyst to speak more openly about drug use and confront its effects.” According to Scripps, “Even though overall teen drug use is down significantly, trends from the Monitoring the Future survey, which is part of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, suggest younger generations are trying illicit drugs at a slightly higher rate than before, and the rate of overdose has risen dramatically due to fentanyl.” Dr. Volkow added, “We tend to polarize the way that we pass information, either glamorizing it or demonizing it, and the reality is drugs are complex.”

Effects Of State Opioid Prescribing Laws On Use Of Opioid And Other Pain Treatments Among Commercially Insured U.S. Adults.

In a study published by the [Annals of Internal Medicine](#) (3/15, McGinty, Bicket, Seewald, 295K), researchers sought to “study the association between state opioid prescribing cap laws, pill mill laws, and mandatory prescription drug monitoring program query or enrollment laws and trends in opioid and guideline-concordant nonopioid pain treatment among commercially insured adults, including a subgroup with chronic noncancer pain conditions.” The researchers “did not identify changes in opioid prescribing or nonopioid pain treatment attributable to state laws.” Primary funding came from the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Addiction Tech Entrepreneurs See \$42B Market For Their Products In US As Overdose Deaths Soar.

[Kaiser Health News](#) (3/21, Rinker) reports, “With the nation’s opioid overdose epidemic hitting a record high of more than 100,000 deaths in 2021, effective ways to fight addiction and expand treatment access are desperately needed.” Many “entrepreneurs in the realm they call addiction tech see a \$42 billion U.S. market for their products and an addiction treatment field that is, in techspeak, ripe for disruption. ... Those who can pay out-of-pocket, or have treatment covered by an employer or insurer, can access one of a dozen addiction telemedicine startups that allow them to consult with a physician and have a medication like buprenorphine mailed directly to their home.”

Survey Finds 40% Of Connecticut Schools Do Not Have Narcan.

[WTIC-TV](#) Hartford, CT (3/22, Kane, 114K) reports, “After a seventh-grader fatally overdosed on fentanyl in Hartford,” Connecticut earlier in 2022, “a new statewide survey said 40% of school districts across the state don’t have Narcan [naloxone] in any school buildings.” According to the article, “Officials said 178 schools took part in the survey from the State Department of Education which found only 60% of school districts in Connecticut have Narcan [naloxone] in at least one school

building while 40% don't have it at all." The National Institute on Drug Abuse is mentioned.

Los Angeles County Pushing To Distribute 100,000 Doses Of Naloxone To Fight Surge Of Opioid Overdoses.

The [Los Angeles Times](#) (3/22, Reyes, 3.37M) reports, "Across the country, health officials and community groups are trying to combat the" opioid "crisis with naloxone, a medication that can block the effects of opioids." In Los Angeles "and San Francisco, researchers found that among people who use drugs, Black and Latino people were less likely to have gotten naloxone." In response, Los Angeles County health "officials set a goal to distribute 50,000 boxes of the medicine by this August, putting 100,000 doses of Narcan [naloxone] into the hands of people."

Illinois Governor Announces Overdose Action Plan To Fight Opioid Crisis.

The [Chicago Tribune](#) (3/21, Spaulding, 2.03M) reports, "Two years after issuing an executive order creating a committee to address the opioid crisis in Illinois, Gov. J.B. Pritzker on Monday announced the formation of a statewide Overdose Action Plan to tackle a problem that only got worse during the pandemic." The plan "will be a partnership to provide mental health and recovery services to Chicago neighborhoods and other areas most affected by opioid deaths." In Chicago in 2020, "opioid-related deaths were up 52% from 2019, according to city data," and statewide, "nearly 3,000 Illinois residents died of an opioid overdose, up 32.7% from 2019."

The Other Epidemic: Overdoses Are Spiking In Tennessee Prisons, As Deadly Drugs Circulate Through Supposedly Secure Facilities.

[WPLN-AM](#) Nashville, TN (3/17, Max, 6K) reports, "Drug deaths have jumped more than eightfold in Tennessee's prisons in just the past two years, from six in 2019 to 49 last year" with almost all of them resulting "from the highly potent opioid fentanyl." According to the article, "The spike in overdoses follows a national trend – both behind bars and beyond them." The National Institute on Drug Abuse is mentioned.

New Hampshire's Progress Fighting Overdose Deaths Examined.

The [Concord \(NH\) Monitor](#) (3/21, Lyons, 27K) reports earlier this month, New Hampshire's "Department of Health and Human Services announced drug overdose deaths" in the state "have dropped 11% since 2018." However, "there's actually been no decrease in the last three of those years – except if you look at just opioid deaths." While "the rest of the country saw drug deaths spike during the pandemic," New Hampshire "was one of the few that didn't." The state "has made progress fighting the drug overdose epidemic," but "evaluating that success – and deciding where to invest resources – requires looking at the details, not a single metric."

Biden Administration Allocates \$25.6M To Entities Combating Overdose Epidemic.

[McClatchy](#) (3/15, Brassil, 29K) reports, “The Biden Administration designated \$25.6 million to give entities combating the overdose epidemic medication-assisted treatments, US Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra told McClatchy on Tuesday.” HHS will make the grants “available through two new programs under the... Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.” Becerra stated, “Every five minutes someone in our nation dies from an overdose. ... This is unacceptable.”

HHS Establishes Grants Totaling \$43.7M To Boost Mental Health, Substance Use Services For People With HIV/AIDS.

[Healthcare Finance News](#) (3/22, Lagasse, 93K) reports HHS “is establishing a number of grant programs, encompassing \$43.7 million worth of funding, that are intended to strengthen mental health and substance use services for those with HIV and AIDS.” The funding, which is being provided through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, “is part of HHS’s new Overdose Prevention Strategy, which calls for accessible, evidence-based, culturally appropriate substance use prevention, treatment and recovery services.” HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra said, “We remain committed to providing people at risk for, or living with HIV/AIDS, with the support and services they need to thrive – no matter who they are or where they live. ... This funding will ensure people who simultaneously face mental health and substance use challenges – and are at risk for or living with HIV/AIDS – will receive the support and treatment that they need.” Dr. Miriam Delphin-Rittmon, who heads SAMHSA, is also quoted.

NIH Study Of Reddit Posts Finds That Self Harm Is ‘Addictive’.

The [Daily Mail \(UK\)](#) (3/21, Shaheen, 4.11M) reports an analysis of nearly 70,000 posts and 290,000 comments from 38,000 Reddit users “finds that people who partake in self-harm use similar terms to describe their behavior as substance abusers do.” Researchers at the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) “note that users would describe ‘urges’ and ‘cravings’ to self-harm, like an addict would.” NIDA Technology and Translation Research Unit Chief Dr. Brenda Curtis, a senior author of the analysis, said, “Our findings here suggest that addiction language may feel familiar and comfortable for patients who self-harm. We must listen and learn from these lived experiences.” The findings were published Monday in the Journal of Behavioral Addictions. NIDA Director Dr. Nora Volkow said, “Non-suicidal self-injury is often private and hidden, and like substance use disorders, is highly stigmatized and can lead to significant harm if left undiagnosed and untreated. ... Though this study alone does not demonstrate that self-injury can necessarily be classified as an addiction, learning more about the addictive-like behaviors of self-harm will be crucial to improve our understanding and treatment of this condition.”

EHR Optimization Doubles Completion Rates Of HCV Screening While Cutting Clinician Burden, Study Suggests.

[EHR Intelligence](#) (3/21, Nelson) reports that “an EHR optimization doubled completion rates of hepatitis C virus (HCV) screening while cutting down on clinician burden, according to a study” in which investigators examined “over 7,500 patient encounters, with about 4,400 patients under the pre-existing alert system and approximately 3,200 with the no-click default system.” The [findings](#) published in JAMA Network Open revealed that “overall, the HCV screening rate doubled among patients seen in the no-click system,” with completed screenings jumping from 42% to 80%.

To Engage Injection Drug Users In HCV Care, Go To Where They Are.

[Medscape](#) (3/17, Brooks, Subscription Publication, 219K) reports, “For injection drug users with hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection, providing treatment opportunities within a local needle exchange program can provide care to more patients and eventually cure more patients.” The study “included 165 injection drug users with HCV (mean age, 42 years; 78% men); 82 were randomly allocated to the accessible care intervention, and 83 to a usual care control group.” Medscape adds, “In an intent-to-treat analysis, those enrolled in the accessible care group achieved sustained viral eradication at 12 months at significantly higher rates than those in the control group (67% vs 23%; $P < .$ ” The [findings](#) were published online March 14 in JAMA Internal Medicine. The National Institute on Drug Abuse funded the study.

Pennsylvania Hospitals Implementing New Model Of Care Using Telemedicine.

The [Pittsburgh Business Times](#) (3/16, Gough, 850K) reports, “The changes in physician strategy at UPMC Kane and other hospitals in Pennsylvania are part of a state program to save or increase access for rural communities that otherwise might not be able to retain the same level of health care” they “had in the past.” Last month, the facility “began a first-of-its-kind in the state program that replaced on-site physicians in the ER and inpatient hospital with advance practice providers – nurse practitioners – and a constant telemedicine link with a larger hospital within the system, UPMC Hamot in Erie. UPMC and the Pennsylvania Department of Health have been working for more than two years behind the scenes on this program.”

After Decade Of Debate, US Psychiatric Body Adds Prolonged Grief As New Disorder.

The [New York Times](#) (3/18, A1, Barry, 20.6M) reported, “After more than a decade of argument, psychiatry’s most powerful body in the United States added a new disorder this week to its diagnostic manual: prolonged grief.” The decision “marks an end to a long debate within the field of mental health, steering researchers and clinicians to view intense grief as a target for medical treatment, at a moment when many Americans are overwhelmed by loss.” The “new diagnosis, prolonged grief disorder, was designed to apply to a narrow slice of the population who are

incapacitated, pining and ruminating a year after a loss, and unable to return to previous activities.”

Brain-Imaging Studies Seeking To Understand Mental-Health Disorders May Have Too Few Participants To Produce Valid Findings, Investigators Posit.

According to the [New York Times](#) (3/16, Richtel, 20.6M), for about the past 20 years, investigators “have used brain-imaging technology to try to identify how the structure and function of a person’s brain connects to a range of mental-health ailments, from anxiety and depression to suicidal tendencies.” Now, findings published online March 16 in the journal *Nature* call “into question whether much of this research is actually yielding valid findings.” This is because “many such studies, the paper’s authors found, tend to include fewer than two dozen participants, far shy of the number needed to generate reliable results.” The researchers based their analysis on “three of the largest studies using brain-imaging technology to reach conclusions about brain structure and mental health. All three studies are ongoing: the Human Connectome Project, which has 1,200 participants; the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development...study, with 12,000 participants; and the UK Biobank study, with 35,700 participants.”

North Carolina Birth Control Law Takes Effect.

The [Raleigh \(NC\) News & Observer](#) (3/14, Dean, 396K) reports a new state law which took effect Monday “allows North Carolinians access to birth control, as well as several other medications, directly from a pharmacist without a doctor’s prescription.” The law, which went into effect on February 1, was awaiting implementation by State Health Director Dr. Betsey Tilson. As of Monday, pharmacists in the state “have more direct instructions for dispensing the contraceptives listed in the law, and required training will be available to further equip them for the task.” **“The law expands pharmacists’ scope of practice by allowing immunizing pharmacists to “dispense, deliver or administer” certain nicotine replacement therapies, oral or transdermal (or patch) contraceptives, prenatal vitamins, post-exposure prophylaxis medications and glucagon.”** **[This may open the door to allow pharmacists to prescribe addiction treatment medications.]**

Does Medicare Cover Acupuncture?

In a commentary for [Forbes](#) (3/15, 10.33M), CMS technical expert Diane Omdahl writes, “Even though more than 10 million acupuncture treatments are administered annually in the United States alone, insurance coverage has been described as inconsistent.” A poll “of 45 commercial, Medicaid, and Medicare Advantage plans found that only one-third covered acupuncture, suggesting most patients pay for acupuncture treatments entirely out-of-pocket.” However, CMS “did not consider acupuncture to be reasonable and necessary and determined there was no convincing evidence that it relieved pain” until it found out, though systematic reviews, that there was “scant evidence of opioids’ effectiveness in

treating low back pain.” Omdahl concludes, “Medicare will cover all types of acupuncture, including dry needling, for treatment of chronic low back pain,” but it “does not cover acupuncture for any other condition.” The CMS and NIH are mentioned in this story.

How Art Can Heal The Brain: Short Wave.

In an episode of the “Short Wave” podcast on its site, [NPR](#) (3/17, Hamilton, 3.69M) tells us about an initiative called the NeuroArts Blueprint,” which aims to conduct rigorous scientific testing of art therapies that rely on music, poetry, or visual arts “to ease a host of brain disorders from Parkinson’s to PTSD.” NIH Director Dr. Francis Collins is mentioned.

Demand For Sonoran Desert Toad’s Psychedelic Venom Leading To Concerns Its Population Could Collapse.

The [New York Times](#) (3/20, Romero, 20.6M) reports, “Riding the wave of greater mainstream acceptance of psychedelics for treating mental disorders and addiction, a fast-growing retreat industry is touting the potential of the” secretions of the Sonoran desert toad. However, “in a sign of the unintended consequences of the psychedelic resurgence, scientists are warning that the scramble by users to obtain the toads – involving poaching, over-harvesting and illegal trafficking in arid expanses straddling the border with Mexico – could trigger a collapse in Sonoran desert toad populations.”

How ‘Magic Mushrooms’ Could Follow In The Footsteps Of Cannabis.

[Politico](#) (3/23, Zhang, Crampton, 6.73M) reports, “A movement to decriminalize or legalize psychedelic substances such as ‘magic mushrooms’ is being driven by the same playbook that helped Americans not only destigmatize but politically embrace cannabis over the past decade.” Indeed, “much like the changing attitudes toward marijuana use, nascent research and personal stories – particularly from military veterans – are convincing some lawmakers to rethink longstanding prohibitions on these drugs.” The National Institute on Drug Abuse last year “awarded a \$4 million grant to explore the impact of psilocybin on tobacco addiction.”

Funding Opportunities



GRANTS & FUNDING

NIH Central Resource for Grants and Funding Information

[RFA-DA-23-014](#)

[Avenir Award Program for Chemistry and Pharmacology of Substance Use Disorders \(DP1- Clinical Trial Not Allowed\)](#)

[NOT-DA-22-054](#)

[NIDA Challenge "CODE \(Cause of Death Elucidated\) in Drug Overdose: Rapid and portable cause of death detection technologies to improve drug overdose-related mortality counts"](#)

[PAR-22-137](#)

[Accelerating the Pace of Child Health Research Using Existing Data from the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development \(ABCD\) Study \(R01-Clinical Trial Not Allowed\)](#)

[PAR-22-138](#)

[Accelerating the Pace of Child Health Research Using Existing Data from the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development \(ABCD\) Study \(R21-Clinical Trial Not Allowed\)](#)

[RFA-DA-23-010](#)

[Enhancing Social Connectedness and Ameliorating Loneliness to Prevent and Treat SUD and Support Recovery \(R34 - Clinical Trial Optional\)](#)

[RFA-DA-23-009](#)

[Enhancing Social Connectedness and Ameliorating Loneliness to Prevent and Treat SUD and Support Recovery \(R21 - Clinical Trial Not Allowed\)](#)

[PAR-22-133](#)

[NIDA Research Center of Excellence Grant Program \(P50 Clinical Trial Optional\)](#)

[RFA-DA-23-004](#)

[Single Cell Opioid Responses in the Context of HIV \(SCORCH\) Program Expansion: CNS Data Generation for Chronic Opioid, Methamphetamine, Cocaine and/or Cannabinoid Exposures \(U01 - Clinical Trial Not Allowed\)](#)

[RFA-CA-22-017](#)

[Small Business Transition Grant For Early Career Scientists \(R42 Clinical Trial Not Allowed\)](#)

CCTST Funding Opportunity:

Applications for [Processes and Methods Grants](#) from the Center for Clinical and Translational Science and Training (CCTST) are due by Sunday, April 17.

This two-step pilot grant program is designed to support clinical research professionals as well as patient advocacy groups at a local, regional or national level in the conduction of projects focused on advancing specific processes and/or methods important to clinical and translational research. The proposals awarded in the first step of this grant mechanism will receive funds up to \$5,000 and will be given four months to produce a more complete six-page research proposal. Awardees of the second step will receive seed funds up to \$40,000 per year to help them develop a long-term (two- to five-year) extramural grant.

Applications will be accepted from faculty or staff from all UC campuses and affiliates, regional colleges and members of the Greater Cincinnati community and patient advocacy groups. Collaborative groups of investigators spanning disciplines and programs are strongly encouraged. Submissions from underrepresented and minority investigators are also encouraged. Applicants must be CCTST members.

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