

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**

**Department of Environmental and Public Health Sciences Wednesday Seminar Series, Wednesday, April 6:** Nichole Nidey, PhD, assistant professor, Department of Pediatrics, will present "Perinatal Substance Use: Methods to Expand Our Understanding of Substance Use Around the Timing of Pregnancy" at 10 a.m. in Kehoe Auditorium, G26, Kettering Laboratory. **(CAR member, Nichole Nidey, PhD, is presenting)**

### **Addiction services helped decrease overdose deaths in Hamilton County in 2021**

A mass of addiction services helped decrease overdose deaths in Hamilton County to about 454 last year. That's the lowest rate since 2017, when the county saw a peak of 570 overdose deaths. A new influx of cash from a recent national opiate settlement will boost those services. According to the Hamilton County Addiction Response Coalition (HC ARC), Ohio will get payouts of more than \$800 million over 18 years. Locally, Hamilton County...

### **Bar in Over-the-Rhine offers Narcan, fentanyl test strips as lawmakers, organizations push for wider access**

CINCINNATI — Lawmakers in Ohio are looking into giving drug users access to tools they say could prevent an accidental overdose. Dennis Cauchon, president of Harm Reduction Ohio, testified last week in favor of Senate Bill 296, a bill that would revise the state's drug paraphernalia law that governs access to naloxone and

certain narcotic testing product like fentanyl test strips. In written testimony to the Senate Health Committee...

### **Battling the drug epidemic**

As the guest speaker for the monthly Highland County Drug Abuse Prevention Coalition meeting Wednesday, Highland County Probation Department Director of Programming and Clinical Services Tonya Sturgill detailed the department's involvement in innovative programs that work to fight the drug problem. In 2015, Sturgill, at the behest of the probation department's director, kick-started a program to administer Vivitrol...

### **Drug education important, but more is needed**

Many of us remember the drug education programs of the 1980s. D.A.R.E., "Just Say No," and even a New Teen Titans drug awareness campaign from DC comics were just the tip of the iceberg. There has been mixed data about whether any of that did much good, but lessons from those campaigns are being applied today. Rather than giving up, Ohio is giving it another shot, this time with the Drug Resilience Education Awareness...

## **National News**

### **Churches, Health Care Align To Offer Trusted Space For Addiction Treatment.**

The [Connecticut Post](#) (3/29, 310K) reports that in Connecticut, "alliances of frontline health care workers with trusted community leaders are addressing the alarming rise of substance use disorders by leveraging the cultural power of churches to reach people in need of help." For example, an NIH-funded "study recruited people of color with primarily alcohol use problems to attend an eight-week program." They were "divided into a control group attending conventional treatment at a New Haven clinic run by the Midwestern Connecticut Council of Alcoholism (MCCA), with the remainder going into a treatment group at [a] church." Participants and organizers praised the program and believe it will help many people suffering with addiction.

### **Key House Committee Formally Clears Federal Marijuana Legalization Bill For Floor Vote This Week.**

[Marijuana Moment](#) (3/30, Jaeger) reports that the House Rules Committee "on Wednesday formally advanced a bill to federally legalize marijuana to the floor, making in order a number of amendments and blocking others as part of a final rule." The article adds, "The MORE Act, sponsored by House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), would remove marijuana from the list of federally controlled substances, promote equity in the industry and impose a federal tax on marijuana products to fund various initiatives." The National Institute on Drug Abuse is mentioned in this story.

### **NIDA Director Surprises GOP Senator By Asserting Legalization Hasn't Increased Adolescent Marijuana Use.**

[420 with CNW](#) (3/30) reports that National Institute on Drug Abuse Director Dr. Nora Volkow last week “restated that marijuana use among teenagers has not increased in states where cannabis is legal,” astonishing Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-LA), “who said that he awaited a different outcome that would be similar to the alcohol-related trends.” Volkow addressed the issue “during a hearing in front of the Senate Health, Education Labor & Pensions (HELP) Committee.” Volkow “made it clear that the facts did not reinforce the common prohibitionist notion that reforming cannabis regulations increases underage use.”

### **U.S. Senate Votes To Expand Cannabis Research.**

[New Jersey Star-Ledger](#) (3/26, Salant, 1.47M) reported, “A unanimous U.S. Senate has voted to expand research into cannabis to see if there are any medical benefits to the drug and its compounds, including cannabidiol.” The bill “would require the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the National Institutes of Health to report to Congress on the potential benefits or harms associated with using cannabis.”

### **Commentary Urges New Methods Of Combatting Drug Overdoses.**

Columnist Lane Filler writes in an opinion piece for [Newsday \(NY\)](#), “When 50,000 people died of overdoses in the United States from April 2015 to April 2016, it marked an all-time high, terrifying communities and spurring new prevention and treatment programs.” Then, “by April 2021, after 12 months of COVID, that 2016 fatality record had doubled again, to 100,000 overdose deaths in a year, including nearly 800 Long Islanders.” Filler says, “Other countries have made huge strides in stopping” overdose deaths “with methods like supervised injection sites and government-tested heroin, practices that remain mostly anathema in this country.” He writes, “We would be wise in the United States to test large pilot programs allowing supervised injection locations to dispense government-monitored heroin to those already addicted.”

### **From Opioids To Medicare, Democrats Focusing On Health Care.**

[WebMD](#) (3/30, Young, 4.27M) reports President Biden's 2023 budget “asks Congress to expand funding for mental health services and programs to treat people with opioid use disorder.” Lawmakers “have been able to find bipartisan agreement on these two issues in recent years, making the Biden proposals seem feasible.” In addition, the budget “proposes changing the name of the National Institute on Drug Abuse to the National Institute on Drugs and Addiction and to change the name of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism to the National Institute on Alcohol Effects and Alcohol-Associated Disorders.” The article mentions the Indian Health Service.

### **Trends in Seizures of Fentanyl 2018-2021**

Law enforcement seizures of pills containing illicit fentanyl increased dramatically between January 2018 and December 2021, according to a new study. The number of individual pills seized by law enforcement increased nearly 50-fold from the first quarter of 2018 to the last quarter of 2021 and the proportion of pills to total seizures more than doubled, with pills representing over a quarter of illicit fentanyl seizures by the end of 2021. The study also found an increase in the number of fentanyl-containing powder seizures during this time. Comparing data from the first quarter of 2018 with the last quarter of 2021, the team found that the number of seizures of pills containing fentanyl increased from 68 to 635, and the total number of individual pills seized by law enforcement increased from 42,202 to 2,089,186. Seizures of powder containing fentanyl also increased from 424 to 1,539, and the total weight of powder seized increased from 298.2 kg to 2,416.0 kg. [\[Article attached.\]](#)

### **More States Legalize Fentanyl Test Strips.**

[MedPage Today](#) (3/28, D'Ambrosio, 183K) reports, “Last week, Tennessee and New Mexico became the latest states to legalize fentanyl test strips (FTS).” As an increasing number of states move to decriminalize FTS, “varying laws across states and lingering stigma around harm reduction pose barriers to access.” National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) Chief of Science Policy Branch Emily Einstein, PhD, said, “Harm reduction as a concept is really not societally accepted. ... As these tools emerge, if we can normalize the idea of harm reduction, that would be a huge public health benefit.” The article adds, “While there is preliminary evidence that fentanyl test strips might influence behaviors, NIDA is funding further research to understand how FTS are used and how effective they might be as a harm reduction tool,” Einstein said in an interview.” However, Einstein added that “harm reduction is a super critical element for addressing our overdose crisis.”

### **California Legislators Introduce Bills Targeting Fentanyl.**

The [Los Angeles Times](#) (3/30, Wiley, 3.37M) reports, “California lawmakers are responding to a surge in fentanyl overdoses and deaths in their cities with a list of bills that include imposing stronger penalties for distributing the synthetic opioid and easing access to safer consumption and treatment.” Proposals include cracking down on social media opioid marketplaces, legalizing “so-called safe injection sites,” and establishing a “California Fentanyl Abuse Task Force in efforts to collect data on usage and to ramp up public awareness,” among others.

### **Record Fentanyl Deaths Impact Local Families In California.**

[KNBC-TV](#) Los Angeles (3/28, Lopez, Drechsler, 242K) reports, “Drug overdose deaths top 100,000 annually for the first time, driven by fentanyl, according to” provisional CDC data. While celebrities who died after overdosing on the powerful and synthetic drug fentanyl “make headlines, across Southern California similar tragedies are unfolding – sons and daughters – deaths rising at an alarming rate.” According to

the article, “The NBC4 I-Team analyzed data from the Centers for Disease Control and found since 2019 the number of overdose deaths caused by synthetic drugs in California is dramatically higher than cocaine and heroin. Nearly two thirds of annual overdose deaths [are] now connected to synthetic opioids, according to the CDC.”

### **Two Arrested After Selling Deadly Fentanyl During “Flash Sale” In DC Neighborhood.**

The [Washington Post](#) (3/29, Hermann, 10.52M) reports, “Two people arrested in the sale of a deadly batch of fentanyl that police said killed nine people in the District knew the drugs were lethal and sold them in a discount ‘flash sale,’ a federal prosecutor said.” According to the Post, “Assistant US Attorney David T. Henek said word of that sale quickly spread through a neighborhood near Nationals Park the morning of Jan. 28, drawing customers” who thought that they were getting a deal on cocaine.

### **Fentanyl Crisis Increasingly Impacting Children In U.S.**

[NBC News](#) (3/25, 4.91M) reported that America’s fentanyl crisis is increasingly affecting young children. A young boy recently died in Philadelphia hospital after being found unresponsive on a school bus. Prosecutors said that the boy’s uncle forced him to clean up paraphernalia that contained fentanyl. NBC added, “Fentanyl is tens of times more powerful than morphine and is now the most common drug involved in overdose incidents in the US, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse.”

### **Federal Prosecutors Say Pharmacies In A Small Tennessee Town Helped To Exacerbate The Opioid Crisis.**

[USA Today](#) (3/27, 12.7M) publishes a Kaiser Health News article which says “federal prosecutors have unveiled a rare criminal case alleging” that pharmacy owners in the small Tennessee town of Celina “intentionally courted opioid seekers by filling dangerous prescriptions that would have been rejected elsewhere.” These “pharmacies are accused of giving cash handouts to keep customers coming back, and one allegedly distributed its own currency, ‘monkey bucks,’ inspired by a pet monkey that was once a common sight behind the counter.” Indeed, a couple of “pharmacists admitted in plea agreements they attracted large numbers of patients from ‘long distances’ by ignoring red flags indicating pills were being misused or resold. In their wake, prosecutors say, these Celina pharmacies left a rash of addiction, overdoses, deaths, and millions in wasted tax dollars.”

### **Blackfoot Tribe Declares State Of Emergency After Drug Overdoses.**

The [AP](#) (3/23) reports, “Blackfoot Tribal leaders declared a state of emergency on the northwestern Montana reservation following a string of fentanyl overdoses and drug-related deaths.” There were four deaths linked “to drugs and 17 overdoses over a one week period this month, the Blackfoot Tribal Business Council said

Monday. Tribal leaders say they will set up a drug prevention task force to help combat the problem.”

### **Black Americans’ Overdose Death Rates Increased More Quickly Than Those For Any Other Racial, Ethnic Group In 2020, Mirroring Philadelphia Trend, Analysis Finds.**

The [Philadelphia Inquirer](#) (3/23) reports, “Black Americans’ overdose death rates increased more quickly than those for any other racial or ethnic group in 2020, a new study has found, confirming fears that the COVID-19 pandemic only deepened an already-alarming demographic shift in drug-related fatalities.” According to the Inquirer, “Philadelphia mirrored the trend in 2020, when deadly overdoses soared by 29% among Black Philadelphians from the year before, even as they decreased by 10% among white Philadelphians.” The national study “looked at data from the CDC and the National Center for Health Statistics, cataloging death rates per 100,000 people by race and ethnicity between 1999 and 2020.” The findings were published in JAMA Psychiatry.

### **ONDCP Director Says Roadmap Of How White House Plans To Tackle Growing US Addiction Crisis Is In Advanced Stages Of Finalization.**

The [Washington Post](#) (3/23, Rouben, 10.52M) reports Rahul Gupta, the director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), “says an inaugural drug control strategy – a road map of how the White House plans to tackle the nation’s growing addiction crisis – is in ‘the advanced stages of being finalized.’” In an interview last week, Gupta stated, “We are working diligently to make sure that we get it out as quickly as possible because of the urgency that we have placed and the president has placed on this issue.” Gupta “declined to specify a firm date,” however. Meanwhile, “an ONDCP spokesperson said the administration continues to implement the drug policy priorities it identified last year.”

### **Oregon Funds Addiction Recovery Programs, But They Are Challenged By Staffing Issues.**

[NPR](#) (3/28, Riddle, 3.69M) reports, “Oregon has recently funded positions for dozens” of peer mentorship type roles at addiction and recovery facilities “across the state, and there are many more jobs coming.” The move is “part of the state’s new approach to addressing substance abuse.” However, it may prove difficult to staff these addiction recovery programs.

### **The Indigenous Tribe Fighting Back Against The Addiction Epidemic.**

[The Guardian \(UK\)](#) (3/30, 5.53M) reports, “The Lummi Nation, on the US west coast,” has “faced addiction issues on the reservation for decades.” Now, the indigenous tribe is using “a combination of culturally-based healing and western-based substance abuse treatment approaches, all centered on love and compassion.” National Institute on Drug Abuse Director Dr. Nora Volkow says that the issue of drug abuse among Native people has been neglected.

### **Positive Drug Tests Among American Workers Reach Two-Decade High.**

The [Wall Street Journal](#) (3/29, Feuer, Subscription Publication, 8.41M) reports the amount of American workers that tested positive for drugs reached a two-decade high in 2021, with the increase being driven by positive marijuana tests.

### **New Data-sharing Requirements From The National Institutes Of Health Are A Big Step Toward More Open Science.**

Rochester Institute of Technology Open@RIT Director Stephen Jacobs in [The Conversation](#) (3/24, 162K) writes, “Starting on Jan. 25, 2023, many of the 2,500 institutions and 300,000 researchers that the U.S. National Institutes of Health supports will need to provide a formal, detailed plan for publicly sharing the data generated by their research. For many in the scientific community, this new NIH Data Management and Sharing Policy sounds like a no-brainer.” He says, “The journal Nature has called the impact of the NIH’s new data management policy ‘seismic,’ saying that it could potentially create a ‘global standard’ for data sharing. This type of data sharing is likely to produce many benefits to science, but there also are some concerns over how researchers will meet the new requirements.”

### **HHS-OIG: 40% Of Medicare Beneficiaries Obtained Behavioral Health Services Via Telehealth During First Year Of Pandemic.**

[Healthcare IT News](#) (3/30, Jercich, 2K) reports the HHS-OIG recently unveiled “a study examining how Medicare beneficiaries used telehealth during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic.” The article adds, “By analyzing Medicare fee-for-service claims data and Medicare Advantage encounter data from March 1, 2020, to February 28, 2021, along with those from the same period the year prior, the agency calculated the total number of services used via telehealth and in-person, as well as the types of services used.” OIG analyst John Gordon said “we looked at how Medicare beneficiaries accessed both mental health and substance use disorder services during the first year of the pandemic. And as I was alluding to earlier, we found that beneficiaries received more than 40% of all behavioral health services using telehealth.”

### **Strategies To Help People Find A Mental Health Professional Highlighted.**

The [New York Times](#) (3/29, Caron, 20.6M) provides tips on how people can find a mental health professional, particularly “during the pandemic, when many...report they cannot keep up with demand and must turn away patients.” The Times adds that when it “surveyed 1,320 mental health professionals in November, nine out of 10 therapists said the number of people seeking care was on the rise.” One strategy for finding a mental health clinician is to utilize an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). An EAP “can help employees resolve personal problems by connecting them with the right resources, and may also provide a small number of free therapy sessions.” The Times says, “Community-based mental health programs are another

option. You can search for these via the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's treatment locator."

### **Psychotropic Med Use Tied To 'Striking' Post-COVID Dementia Risk.**

[Medscape](#) (3/29, Brooks, Subscription Publication, 219K) reports, "Older adults taking psychotropic medication before contracting COVID-19 are at increased risk dementia in the year following the illness, new research suggests." Findings "from a large study of more than 1700 patients who had been hospitalized with COVID showed a greater than twofold increased risk for post-COVID dementia in those taking antipsychotics and mood stabilizers/anticonvulsants." The research "was funded by the National Institutes of Health."

### **Psychedelics Due To Their Claimed Medical Benefits.**

The [Chicago Tribune](#) (3/28, Keilman, 2.03M) reports, "Marine Corps veteran Justin Wigg was suffering from anger issues and other symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder," so he traveled to Peru last fall to be treated with "a psychedelic, tea-like drink called ayahuasca, brewed from two tropical plants." According to the Tribune, "Such treatments are gaining respect from researchers around the world, who have found natural psychedelics to be promising remedies against depression, anxiety and even alcohol dependence." However, "the federal government still considers them to have no legitimate medical purpose, which makes the plants illegal to grow, sell or consume" in the US. In Illinois, a coalition is "working with state Rep. La Shawn Ford, a Chicago Democrat, to draft a bill that would decriminalize plant-based psychedelics and create a framework through which counselors, religious healers and others could use one of the drugs, psilocybin, the active ingredient in 'magic mushrooms,' therapeutically."

## **Funding Opportunities**



### **GRANTS & FUNDING**

NIH Central Resource for Grants and Funding Information

[NOT-DA-22-052](#)

[Request for Information \(RFI\): Inviting Input on NIDAs Racial Equity Initiative Action Plan](#)

[RFA-DA-23-021](#)

[Developing Regulated Therapeutic and Diagnostic Solutions for Patients Affected by Opioid and/or Stimulants use Disorders \(OUD/StUD\) \(R43/R44 - Clinical Trial Optional\)](#)



[RFA-AI-22-025](#)

[Enhancing HIV Reservoir Susceptibility to Elimination \(R01 Clinical Trial Not Allowed\)](#)

[PAR-22-132](#)

[Implementation Research to Reduce Noncommunicable Disease \(NCD\) Burden in Low- and Middle-Income Countries \(LMICs\) and Tribal Nations During Critical Life Stages and Key Transition Periods \(R01 Clinical Trial Optional\)](#)

[NOT-MH-22-170](#)

[Notice of Special Interest \(NOSI\): Research using implementation science to support the delivery of evidence-based practices in community-based mental or general medical healthcare settings](#)

[NOT-HD-22-002](#)

[Notice of Special Interest \(NOSI\) - Emerging and Existing Issues of Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Research Related to the Health and Well-Being of Women, Children and Individuals with Physical and/or Intellectual Disabilities](#)

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