

Welcome to the weekly newsletter from the University of Cincinnati/UC Health Addiction Center (UCAC)! Each newsletter includes highlights from addiction in the news topics, active funding opportunities offered by NIDA/NIAAA, and information about any new publications from UCAC researchers. **Please note that the next weekly newsletter will be published Friday, May 1.** Please email Jen Rowe (roweji@ucmail.uc.edu) to change your communication preferences. Thank you.

Thank you for your interest in the UC/UC Health Addiction Center - our mission is to generate new knowledge through innovative research, disseminate that knowledge through education and training, and provide high-quality, evidence-based treatment for individuals affected by addiction and related conditions. We are committed to supporting lifelong recovery and promoting dignity and respect for all individuals on their recovery journey.



### **UC/ Regional News**

#### **Ohio Deflection Association Southwest Ohio Regional Lunch & Learn Training**

**Date & Time:** May 12, 2026 – 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

**Location:** Hamilton County Central Campus - Training Room A & B, 1701 Patricia McCollum Way, Cincinnati, Ohio 45237

**Please RSVP to [Tom@ohiodeflectionassociation.org](mailto:Tom@ohiodeflectionassociation.org)**

You are invited to attend the Ohio Deflection Association Southwest Ohio Regional Lunch & Learn Training! The training will be an engaging, collaborative event designed to connect community stakeholders, share insights, and strengthen deflection efforts across our region. Attendees will engage in interactive discussions on regional updates, funding strategies, program needs, and service gaps, helping to shape the future of deflection work in Southwest Ohio and beyond! Attendees will also receive training on the new Ohio Community Alert Notification System (OCANS), along with drug trend updates from the Ohio Narcotics Intelligence Center. This event is free to attend, and lunch will be provided.

#### **How mental health and addiction services in Cuyahoga County could get funded – or cut – next year**

The Cuyahoga County agency that funds mental health and addiction services is launching a new process to better evaluate which programs to invest in and which ones to leave behind as it attempts to balance its own budget. Jason Joyce, the chief executive officer of the Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services

board (ADAMHS), said his agency and nonprofits need to figure out a way to stretch shrinking public dollars to ensure the viability of the critical safety net services. “We’re looking at a system reset, not just a sort of typical funding cycle, right?” Joyce said in an interview with Signal Cleveland. “We’re going...

### **Ohio bill would require addiction warning labels on social media platforms**

A bipartisan bill introduced in the Ohio House would require social media apps and websites to include warning labels if they include features deemed “addictive.” When you start to scroll on social media, it can sometimes be hard to stop. “Autoplay where you don’t even have to interact, you’re just staring at it and it; it does its thing,” state Rep. Christine Cockley (D-Columbus) said. It’s a cycle that Cockley got trapped in. “I’m somebody that already has anxiety and depression; there were probably times where it made that worse,” she said. She isn’t the only one. A California jury just awarded a woman millions after she successfully...

### **Ohio looks to fine Kalshi \$5 million for 'unlicensed' sports betting market**

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Ohio's gambling regulators are getting ready to hit the so-called “prediction market” platform Kalshi with a \$5 million fine for what the state has framed as unlicensed sports betting. The Ohio Casino Control Commission sent Kalshi a notice this week of its “intent to impose” a penalty against the company, arguing that Kalshi has not heeded the state’s warnings to stop allowing sports bets on its platform. “The Commission takes its regulatory responsibilities to ensure compliance with the law and the integrity of sports gaming in Ohio seriously,” the release read. “Kalshi’s refusal to stop offering...

### **Kentucky counties join together to battle opioid crisis**

MAYFIELD, Ky. — With the state set to receive around \$1 billion in opioid settlement funds over the coming years, the Kentucky Association of Counties has formed a cohort of 20 counties across the state to learn how to more efficiently spend the funds. Kentucky will receive the funds as part of the National Settlement Agreement that's dispersing nearly \$50 billion across the country. Graves County and Trigg County have both opted into the KACo Opioid Solutions Network. Leader of the cohort and KACo Opioid Settlement Adviser Lauren Carr said the group will provide information needed to battle the opioid crisis. "All 120...

### **Tippecanoe County opioid committee learning how to spend its millions**

LAFAYETTE, IN — Since 2023, more than \$2.2 million has flowed into Tippecanoe County to combat addiction to opioids, the chemical compounds that ease pain with morphine-like effects but with a tendency to trigger dependency. The funding comes from national settlements that a coalition of state attorneys general reached with companies deemed to have contributed to a national addiction crisis, including manufacturers, distributors and pharmacies, amounting to billions. This money trickles down to states before being disbursed to localities including West Lafayette, Lafayette and Tippecanoe County, where nearly...

## **Protecting Kids from Addictive Social Media**

Social media use is increasingly affiliated with mental health issues and very real dangers for our young people. Given the rise in popularity of social media, Senate Republicans have been working hard to protect young Hoosiers from the dangers of the addictive features that social media platforms use. During the 2026 legislative session, the General Assembly passed House Enrolled Act 1408, which restricts children younger than 16 from setting up social media accounts unless their parents or guardians give consent. HEA 1408 doesn't ban children from using social media, but gives parents and guardians control of their child's access to it. If...

## **National News**

### **The term 'alcoholic' conjures outdated stereotypes about an illness that afflicts 28 million Americans, says expert**

People just aren't drinking the way they used to. "As recently as the late 1990s or early 2000s, 85% or more of high school seniors said they drank in the past year. Now that number is down to about 42%," said Kathryn McHugh, a Harvard Medical School associate professor of psychology at McLean Hospital and the director of the McLean Hospital Stress, Anxiety, and Substance Abuse Laboratory. "Those are whopping changes in effectively less than a generation." Despite those promising trends, alcohol remains a major public health concern, McHugh said. About 28 million Americans had alcohol use disorder in 2024. McHugh's lab...

### **Crackdown on vapes falling short, report finds**

Efforts to crack down on illegal e-cigs in the U.S. may not be keeping pace with sales, a new government report suggests. The report, from the Government Accountability Office, found that enforcement actions by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) have been relatively lackluster, given how large the issue is. Between 2022 and 2025, the DOJ took 88 enforcement actions tied to illegal e-cigs. Most of those (about 50 cases) involved adding online sellers to a list of unauthorized businesses. Another 20 were legal orders aimed at stopping violations, STAT News reported. Illegal vaping products are still widely available. As of June 2024...

### **Flavored tobacco bans linked to lower youth vaping in California**

Researchers from the University of California San Diego have found that local sales bans on flavored tobacco in California are associated with reduced youth vaping over time without increasing cigarette smoking. The findings, based on an analysis of more than 2.8 million middle and high school students, were published April 10, 2026, in JAMA Health Forum. "Our findings suggest that local flavored tobacco bans can be an effective strategy for reducing youth e-cigarette use," said Eric Leas, Ph.D., MPH, assistant professor at the UC San Diego Herbert Wertheim School of Public Health and Human Longevity Science and senior...

## **Medicaid expansion boosted access to opioid addiction treatment medication, study says**

In the eight states that expanded Medicaid after 2018, the number of people receiving prescriptions for the opioid addiction treatment medication buprenorphine increased dramatically, according to a paper that researchers will present next month. The states that expanded Medicaid before that period also saw gains, but they were generally smaller. That's because other changes, aside from Medicaid expansion, made buprenorphine easier to get after 2018. The researchers found that among all patients — those covered by Medicaid, other insurers and the uninsured — the number of buprenorphine prescriptions increased in...

## **Buprenorphine found to be a safe treatment for opioid addiction in pregnancy**

Children born to mothers who used buprenorphine for opioid addiction during pregnancy do not have a greater risk of neurodevelopmental disorders, such as ADHD and autism, compared with children whose mothers took methadone, finds a large US study published by The BMJ. The researchers say these findings "further support buprenorphine as a safe treatment option for opioid use disorder during pregnancy." Buprenorphine and methadone are recommended for the treatment of opioid use disorder during pregnancy. Previous research has shown that buprenorphine is associated with a lower risk of serious health...

## **Historic decline in U.S. overdose deaths threatened by changing street drug supply**

Earlier this year, Naida Rutherford, the coroner in Richland County, South Carolina, was helping investigate what appeared to be a mysterious overdose. The case had many of the hallmarks of a typical fentanyl death. "Every sort of physical manifestation, like the foam coming from the mouth and nose, as if they had an overdose," Rutherford said. "Their blood tested negative for any substance, which was very odd." Her team was stumped, so Rutherford expanded the testing, looking for new compounds. "That's where we found the cyclophosphamide," she told NPR, referring to one of the incredibly potent synthetic opioids...

## **Opioid use stigma may underlie clinician biases towards patients with sickle cell disease**

In season 1, episode 2 of the popular show "The Pitt," a Black woman with sickle cell disease arrives at the emergency department in acute pain, only to be initially dismissed as drug-seeking. "Unfortunately, this contemporary media portrayal is all too relevant," said Austin Wesevich, MD, MPH, MS, a hematologist and health services researcher at the University of Chicago Medicine. "Nationwide, patients with sickle cell disease are not receiving the same quality of care that other patients experience." New research led by Wesevich and colleagues at UChicago Medicine unpacks the intersectional biases that may underlie this disparity...

## **New study shows limitations of naloxone in reversing overdoses from powerful synthetic opioids**

A new study exposes challenges in reversing opioid overdoses with naloxone when potent synthetic drugs like fentanyl and sufentanil are involved, according to a study published in the May 2026 issue of *Anesthesiology*. The findings raise important alarms for health care professionals and the public as the opioid crisis continues. "Our study shows that the current doses of naloxone may not be sufficient to reverse overdoses caused by newer synthetic opioids," said study lead author Maarten A. van Lemmen, Ph.D., of the Department of Anesthesiology and Anesthesia and Pain Research Unit at Leiden University Medical...

## **America's Forgotten War on Drugs**

Platzspitz is a small park located behind the Hauptbahnhof, Zurich's buzzing central train station, and the imposing Swiss National Museum. Today, it's quiet and secluded, a small green where families picnic and tour groups reconvene. But in the mid-1980s, Platzspitz was a disaster. In response to increased heroin traffic from Lebanese and Turkish cartels, the Swiss government passed a law in 1975 that increased punishment for drug use and possession. That did little to stop heroin's spread, however, and by the early 1980s, Platzspitz was reborn as "Needle Park," and home to Zurich's burgeoning heroin scene. At first, Zurich didn't...

## **New research shows a free online tool could improve opioid safety for millions of Australians**

New Monash University research has found that a free, interactive online tool can help people taking prescription opioids for pain to better understand their risks and adopt safer behaviors, more than doubling requests for naloxone, a medicine that reverses opioid overdose. Opioids have remained the leading cause of drug-induced deaths in Australia for over two decades, with two-thirds of opioid-related fatalities involving prescription opioids. An estimated 4 out of 5 people prescribed opioids for chronic pain have at least one overdose risk factor, yet many have limited understanding of these risks. Previous research has...

## **NIDA Small Business Grants Support AI Startups**

For decades, NIDA has leveraged the U.S. government's Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program to bridge the gap between addiction science breakthroughs and real-world implementation. By supporting high-risk, high-impact innovations, we have helped advance solutions aimed at addressing substance use disorders, drug diversion, and emerging public health threats through a wide range of technologies including wearable overdose monitoring devices, wastewater drug detection, and devices used in hospitals to treat neonatal opioid withdrawal. NIDA has also backed companies built from the ground...

### **‘The next opioid epidemic’: Gambling legalization outpaces public health response to addiction**

Mike Sciandra grew up around gamblers. It wasn't long before he became one. Born in Las Vegas, Sciandra's earliest memories center on casino arcades—playing with rolls of quarters while his family gambled on the casino floor. By nine years old, Sciandra played cards for money. By 15, he placed bets at a Keno parlor, where staff knew him well enough to discreetly let him play as a minor. By 21, Sciandra gambled in the big leagues: casinos. He didn't stop for over 20 years. He played through graduate school, jobs, a marriage. Almost every night after his daughter went to bed, Sciandra gambled. On business trips around the Midwest...

### **Jury ruling sharpens questions over when heavy social media use becomes addiction**

On March 25, a California trial awarded \$6 million to a plaintiff who argued that the addictive qualities of social media had caused her harm. Google and Meta, which were the companies that were found liable, disagree with the verdict and intend to appeal. Dar Meshi, an associate professor of advertising and public relations at the Michigan State University College of Communication Arts and Sciences, studies the psychology of technology use, including social media. He recently authored a commentary for the journal *Nature* about social media addiction and can discuss what an addictive behavior is, whether or not social media is...

### **After 'unprecedented' results, SF researchers get closer to HIV cure**

Tom Perrault distinctly remembers the time he received an electric shock in the name of science. “I have a pretty high threshold for pain,” he told SFGATE. But he had never experienced electroporation before, a procedure in which an electric current is used to disrupt cell membranes and make them more permeable to medical treatments. The treatment was one of the first interventions in a recent medical trial based out of UC San Francisco. Researchers were trying to retrain Perrault's immune system to track down and hunt a hidden viral invader: HIV. The disease may no longer be a death sentence, but...

### **Trump to sign executive order on psychedelic drug used abroad to treat PTSD**

A psychedelic used in some countries to treat post-traumatic stress disorder is expected to get a closer examination from the federal government on its safety and effectiveness, sources told CBS News. The White House is drafting an executive order that would signal the Trump administration's willingness to further U.S. research into a drug called ibogaine. Ibogaine, a naturally occurring compound from a shrub native to Africa, is used to treat depression, anxiety, addiction, post-traumatic stress disorder and brain trauma. Because it's illegal in the United States, Americans have been traveling to unregulated clinics, often in Mexico or...

## HHS Tries Again to Sell Congress on Administration for a Healthy America

In the year since Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. announced his plan to consolidate multiple agencies into a new Administration for a Healthy America (AHA), there's been little clarity on if or when this might actually happen. HHS requested funding for the AHA in its FY 2026 budget proposal, but Congress declined to grant it. In the HHS FY 2027 budget request released earlier in April, the AHA is back. In the inaugural AHA request for the 2026 cycle, the agency was framed as a proposal that HHS was still planning to establish, and "look[ed] forward to working with Congress to create." The...

## Funding Opportunities



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

## UCAC Research Members New Publications

### Comparative effectiveness of social-contextual treatments for improving substance-related problems among Black adults: An individual-level data synthesis

Adriana Espinosa, Angela M. Haeny, Lesia M. Ruglass, Caravella McCuistian, Ashley Vena, Christopher Roundtree, Joel Lopez, Antonio A. Morgan-López, A. Kathleen Burlew

*Addiction*

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/add.70405>

### ABSTRACT

**Background and Aims:** Despite similar substance use levels, Black adults experience greater family, legal, employment and other social-contextual challenges related to recovery than other groups. Substance use treatments that address both substance use and social-contextual factors are uniquely positioned to address these substance-related problems and produce more sustainable improvements in social functioning than treatment as usual (TAU) or behavioral controls (Control). The aim of this study was to evaluate changes in substance-related problems among Black adults, focusing on the comparative effectiveness between social-contextual treatments and TAU/Control.

**Design:** Individual-level data synthesis based on secondary analysis of Black adults enrolled in the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) Clinical Trials Network (CTN).

**Setting:** All data were collected in the primary studies between 2001 and 2008 at clinics across the United States.

**Participants:** Black adults who reported cocaine and/or opioid use across nine studies within the NIDA CTN. The sample used herein consisted of individuals from five of these studies who provided data on substance-related problems ( $n = 532$ ; mean age = 39.34; standard deviation = 9.6).

**Measurements:** There were two treatment conditions: Social-contextual (e.g. Motivational Interviewing, Seeking Safety, STAGE 12) and TAU/Control. Moderated nonlinear factor analysis estimated latent scores for substance-related problems, using subscales from the Addiction Severity Index, while accounting for measurement noninvariance across studies, time and covariates. Linear mixed models estimated latent score differences over time between social-contextual treatments and TAU/Control during treatment and from the end of treatment through 12-month follow-up.

**Findings:** Both treatment groups improved across substance-related problem areas from baseline to the end-of-treatment (Cohen's  $d = -0.10$  to  $d = -0.47$ ), with effects maintained at 12-month follow-up. Although social-contextual treatments did not statistically significantly outperform TAU/Control from baseline to end-of-treatment, they showed greater effects from end of treatment to 12-month follow-up in family/social [Cohen's  $d$  difference ( $\Delta d$ ) =  $-0.47$ , 95% confidence interval (CI) =  $-0.57$  to  $-0.38$ ], legal ( $\Delta d = -0.20$ , 95% CI =  $-0.31$  to  $-0.10$ ) and psychiatric problems ( $\Delta d = 0.29$ , 95% CI =  $-0.38$  to  $-0.20$ ) than TAU/Control. Sensitivity analyses indicated that Seeking Safety and STAGE 12 predominantly drove post-treatment improvements in family/social problems.

**Conclusions:** Substance use treatment may yield broader, delayed benefits beyond substance use reduction among Black adults in the United States. Compared with treatment-as-usual, social-contextual treatments can yield more sustainable effects in legal, family and psychiatric areas among Black adults, with interventions such as Seeking Safety and STAGE 12 showing particular benefits in addressing family-related challenges.

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