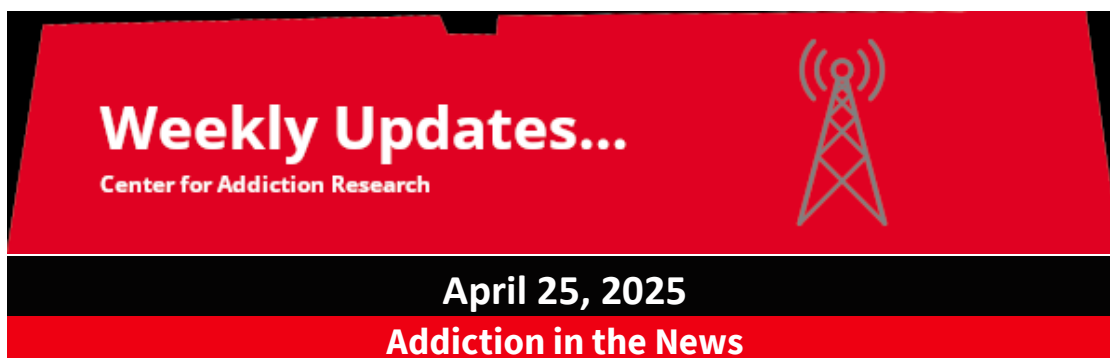


Welcome to the weekly newsletter from the Center for Addiction Research! Each newsletter includes highlights from addiction in the news topics, active funding opportunities offered by NIDA/NIAAA, and information about any new publications from CAR members. Please email Jen Rowe ([roweji@ucmail.uc.edu](mailto:roweji@ucmail.uc.edu))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

#### **Tri-State leaders, advocates come together to find solutions to substance abuse across region**

ERLANGER, Ky. — WCPO 9 is committed to finding solutions, hosting our fourth community conversation Monday to connect advocates, experts and neighbors looking to tackle substance abuse and addiction in our region. The panel discussion took place at the Kenton County Public Library in Erlanger, Kentucky. Led by Good Morning Tri-State anchors Adrian Whitsett and Kristen Skovira, four experts shared their work with the audience. The panel included Newton Police Chief Tom Synan; Lisa Mertiz, President of the Addiction Services Council; Jane Hamilton, Director of Recovery Services for Brighton Center; and Hamilton County Addiction Response's Meagan Guthrie. Synan addressed the recent impact of...

#### **I didn't know how to get out' | Woman arrested for stealing cars while pregnant shares recovery story**

HAMILTON, Ohio — Nicole Hibbard picks up her 8-month-old daughter and smiles. In her small bedroom, she turns on Mickey Mouse. The two stand by her bed and laugh. It's a small moment, but its importance is something Hibbard can't quite put into words. Because it's something she never thought would happen. Last year, Hibbard was arrested for stealing cars while pregnant and using drugs. It was rock bottom for someone who'd been revived with Narcan before — someone who hospital officials once told to get her affairs in order because she was dying from all the drug use. "I didn't think I'd be able to get clean. I didn't know how. I didn't know where to start," Hibbard said. "Until I went to jail, I thought I was going to..."

### **CPD: Smoking marijuana in public is illegal, officers may use discretion**

CINCINNATI —April 20 is widely recognized as a day of celebration for marijuana culture. This year marked the first time cannabis users in the Buckeye State could legally purchase marijuana since Ohio voters approved a citizen-led statute in 2023. Adults over 21 may possess small amounts of marijuana, but smoking the distinct-smelling plant in public remains illegal. That has put the union representing Cincinnati's 1,000 police officers at odds over the department's guidance on enforcement. President of the Fraternal Order of Police Queen City Lodge, Ken Kober, says Cincinnati police officers raised concerns ahead of the event about public use of marijuana and how to enforce it. "So, I reached out to the...

### **Senate passes Johnson drug abuse education bill**

The Ohio Senate passed Senate Bill 7, sponsored by Senator Terry Johnson, R-McDermott, which introduces changes to student instruction on harmful effects of substance use. "In order to effectively fight the war on drugs, we need to take an approach that acknowledges our children are the most impressionable people in our society," Johnson said. "As a first step in curbing the upward path of death and destruction, this bill requires proper and appropriate instruction in the harms of, and restrictions against, drugs of abuse. While simple, I believe this policy change begins a much-needed process of targeting drug prevention in a meaningful way—one that can save lives and prevent Ohio's children from...

### **‘Volatile and unpredictable’: Ohio leaders fight to crack down on illicit drug market**

TOLEDO, Ohio (WTVG) - The landscape of Ohio's illicit drug market is evolving at an unprecedented pace. That's the message from leaders at the Ohio Narcotics Intelligence Center (ONIC). The center collaborates with public health and law enforcement agencies to identify emerging drug trends across Ohio in an effort to intercept drugs before they hit the streets. The ONIC issued its first strategic report this week that looks at the progress Ohio has made in recent years to combat overdose deaths and outlines the challenges facing the state in the next five years. "The illicit market is very volatile and unpredictable right now...

### **State grant to help Trumbull address inmate addiction**

WARREN — A \$250,000-a-year three-year grant from the Ohio Attorney General's Office will work to address the drug addiction and mental health problems for inmates at the Trumbull County jail. Sheriff Michael Wilson, joined Tuesday by Attorney General Dave Yost, said: "This will provide services to people with these issues. We take alcohol and drug addiction issues seriously." Yost said when he was Delaware County prosecutor from 2003 to 2010, "drug addiction and mental health issues were predominant among the jail population and it's only gotten worse in intervening years. Our county jails have become high-priced housing for the mentally ill and the drug addicted." Yost recently set aside \$60 million in...

## **Kentucky auditor announces investigation of the state's medical cannabis program**

FRANKFORT, Ky. (AP) — Kentucky's auditor said Thursday that her office will investigate the state's medical cannabis program after receiving complaints about the lottery system used to award highly sought-after licenses to grow, process and sell the medicinal products to eligible patients. Auditor Allison Ball said her office will examine the application process and how business licenses were awarded as part of its review of the Office of Medical Cannabis in Gov. Andy Beshear's administration. The state received thousands of applications for licenses, and Beshear has said the state-run lotteries last year were a fair way to give applicants a chance to land the limited number of licenses awarded. The governor's...

## **National News**

### **Oral and Injectable Naltrexone Similarly Effective for Alcohol Use Disorder**

Daily oral and monthly extended-release injectable naltrexone were similarly effective at reducing heavy drinking days in patients with alcohol use disorder (AUD), a hospital-based randomized trial showed. Among 248 adults prescribed treatment at hospital discharge, the mean percentage of heavy drinking days decreased from 66.7% at baseline to 27.4% at 3 months in the oral naltrexone group and from 70.7% to 23.8% in the extended-release injectable naltrexone group (difference -38.4 vs -46.4 percentage points,  $P=0.14$ ), reported Jeffrey Samet, MD, MPH, of the Boston University Chobanian and Avedisian School of...

### **A repurposed anti-inflammatory drug may help treat alcohol use disorder and related pain**

A preclinical study by scientists at Scripps Research finds that a drug already FDA-approved for treating inflammatory conditions may help reduce both alcohol intake and pain sensitivity—two issues that commonly co-occur with alcohol use disorder (AUD). The results, published in JCI Insight, suggest that the drug apremilast—a phosphodiesterase-4 (PDE4) inhibitor, or a compound that blocks an enzyme involved in inflammation—could be repurposed as a dual-acting therapy for AUD, particularly in individuals who have pain during and after alcohol use. AUD affects an estimated 400 million people aged 15 years or older...

### **How the fear of missing out affects young people's binge drinking**

Past English government campaigns have tried to curb youth drinking by focusing on the things young people might do while drunk and regret later: falling off scaffolding, vomiting or ending up looking a mess. And while more recent attempts, such as the Spread Campaign in Australia, have tended to be less overtly graphic, they still focus exclusively on harms associated with drinking, such as cancer. They use fear to try and scare people into changing their drinking behavior. But despite their popularity with policymakers, psychological research has generally shown that campaigns based on fear do not change...

### **Sex differences may drive substance use patterns in panic disorder patients**

In a research article, researchers have revealed compelling evidence that biological sex significantly influences substance use patterns among individuals with panic disorder, with implications for both clinical assessment and treatment strategies. The study, published in the journal *Genomic Psychiatry*, examined associations between panic disorder and both alcohol and tobacco use disorders in a demographically diverse sample of nearly 11,000 individuals. The research team, led by Dr. Michele Pato, from Rutgers University, found that while panic disorder generally increased the risk of problematic substance use, men with...

### **THC levels have quadrupled since the 1990s**

U.S. cannabis has way more THC than it did decades ago. Why it matters: As more people go "California sober," new or returning cannabis users may underestimate the potency — and get dangerously high. By the numbers: In the 1990s, 5% THC cannabis was some of the strongest you could find. Today, "it's very difficult to find cannabis that's less than 20% THC" in a Los Angeles dispensary, says Ziva Cooper, director of the UCLA Center for Cannabis and Cannabinoids. According to National Institute of Drug Abuse data, cannabis samples seized in 1995 averaged less than 4% THC. In 2022, they averaged more than 16%. The percentage...

### **Smoking, eating, vaping, dabbing are most common routes of marijuana use**

Smoking, eating, vaping, and dabbing are the most common routes of marijuana use, according to research published in the April 10 issue of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. Zerleen S. Quader, Ph.D., from the CDC in Atlanta, and colleagues examined the weighted prevalence rates of current and daily or near-daily marijuana use overall and by demographic characteristics, as well as by pregnancy status among women aged 49 years and younger, using data from 22 states and two territories that administered the optional marijuana module of the Behavioral Risk...

### **New research shows how smoking, vaping and marijuana affect airway health**

Cigarette smoke has a greater impact on airway health than marijuana smoke or vaping, according to new research by UC Davis. The interdisciplinary study analyzed metabolites (molecules produced by cellular chemical reactions) from the exhaled breath of participants to analyze how airways responded. The researchers found that tobacco smoke, in particular, increased inflammation and oxidative stress. Their paper was published in *Respiratory Research*. "We didn't measure the chemicals that come out of cigarettes or marijuana, we measured the responses of the airway epithelial cells, as well as some systemic responses..."

### **Smoking cessation drug varenicline helps young adults quit vaping, clinical trial reveals**

A new study by investigators from Mass General Brigham showed that teens and young adults who took varenicline—an FDA-approved, twice-daily smoking cessation pill for adults—are more than three times as likely to successfully quit vaping compared to those who received only behavioral counseling. Results are published in JAMA. "Vaping is extremely popular among kids, and we know that this early nicotine exposure can make drugs like cocaine more addictive down the line, yet ours is the first treatment study to look at this vulnerable population," said lead author A. Eden Evins, MD, MPH, director of the Center for Addiction...

### **Researchers uncover barriers to opioid accessibility for seriously ill patients**

In a study published in NEJM Catalyst, researchers at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai describe how measures to curb opioid overdoses in the general population have compromised a critical cornerstone of palliative care. Opioids are medically necessary analgesics for the relief of moderate to severe pain in patients with cancer and other serious illnesses, such as acute sickle cell crises, and for patients following surgery. "The opioid crisis of overdose deaths remains omnipresent; however, a new threat has emerged among vulnerable populations who need these medicines as first-line treatment for their pain...

### **Californians can now buy opioid reversal drugs from the state online**

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Californians can now buy opioid reversal drugs directly from the state under a program aimed at making the life-saving medication less expensive and more accessible, officials said Monday. The state began selling its own generic version of Narcan last year for \$24 per twin-pack to businesses and local governments, and will now also sell to individual consumers online. A box containing two doses of naloxone nasal spray costs between \$45 and \$70 from regular pharmacies and online marketplaces. Opioid overdose deaths, which are caused by heroin, fentanyl and oxycodone, have increased...

### **Walgreens to pay \$300 million to settle claims it illegally filled invalid opioids prescriptions**

Walgreens Boots Alliance has agreed to pay \$300 million to settle claims that it unlawfully filled millions of invalid prescriptions for opioids and other controlled substances. In its complaint, the Justice Department, along with other federal agencies, alleges that for more than a decade pharmacists at the second largest pharmacy chain in the U.S. knowingly filled prescriptions of controlled substances, despite clear signs of their illegitimacy. It also claims that Walgreens pressured its workers to fill the prescriptions quickly without regard for proper legal protocols. "These practices allowed millions of opioid pills and other...

### **Safer opioid supply improves health outcomes among people at high risk of overdose**

Research from ICES and Unity Health Toronto shows that safer opioid supply programs and methadone both reduce opioid overdoses, health care utilization, and costs. The work appears in *The Lancet Public Health*. Safer opioid supply (SOS) programs provide pharmaceutical-grade opioids such as hydromorphone to people struggling with opioid use disorder. Prescribed opioid medications are a safer alternative to drugs found in the unregulated drug supply due to the potency and unpredictability of that supply. "This is the first population-based study to compare SOS programs with opioid agonist treatment, and..."

### **NIH chief voices support for Nora Volkow, head of drug addiction research institute**

The director of the National Institutes of Health gave a ringing endorsement to the nation's top addiction researcher, Nora Volkow, this week in his first public remarks on the drug overdose crisis — a potential signal that her position as leader of the National Institute on Drug Abuse is, at least for now, secure. Speaking at the Rx and Illicit Drug Summit in Nashville, Tenn., this week, the NIH's newly installed director, Jay Bhattacharya, told the audience that he was "proud" of her and NIDA's work. While the Trump administration has never specifically called Volkow's credentials or job security into question, Bhattacharya's remarks come at a...

### **Tusi (a mixture of ketamine and other drugs) is on the rise among NYC nightclub attendees, study suggests**

"Tusi," also known as "tucibí" or "pink cocaine," is a drug concoction that emerged in Latin America and Europe within the past decade and is becoming increasingly popular in the U.S. A study published in *Addiction* estimates that in 2024, 2.7% of electronic dance music nightclub-attending adults in New York City (NYC) used Tusi in the past year, with higher use among Hispanic people and people who use other drugs. Consumers often don't understand what Tusi is when they take it. Tusi is commonly confused with the 2C family of drugs—psychedelics—because it is a phonetic translation of "2C." Tusi is also commonly called...

### **Former Trump official says DOGE cuts undermine HIV legacy**

A former top federal health official who served during President Trump's first term warned that the drastic cuts to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) could have "devastating and illogical" impacts on combatting the HIV epidemic. Brett Giroir, who served as assistant secretary for health, wrote in a post on LinkedIn that making progress on the HIV epidemic in the U.S. was one of his first goals when he assumed his new role in Trump's first administration. "During my first week in office, I set an HHS goal to reduce new HIV infections in America by 50 [percent]. We had once-daily medicines that make the HIV virus..."

### **Prison needle programs could save millions in hepatitis C treatment costs**

A new Australian-first study from the Burnet Institute has found that every dollar invested in Australian prison needle and syringe programs could save more than two dollars in treatment costs for hepatitis C and injection-related infections. Hepatitis C is a viral infection that affects the liver and is primarily spread through blood-to-blood contact. Due to the high number of people with a history of injecting drug use in prisons, these settings are crucial for hepatitis C testing and treatment. The paper, titled "Return on investment for a prison-based needle and syringe program in Australia," was published in the Medical Journal of...

### **Iowa House passes measure legalizing psilocybin use**

Iowa lawmakers are moving forward with a proposal to legalize the use of psilocybin, a hallucinogenic chemical produced by psychedelic mushrooms, for psychiatric treatment through a program similar to how the Hawkeye State handles medical cannabis. The state House voted 84-6 on Monday to advance legislation that would create a psilocybin licensing board within the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. The legislation now goes to the state Senate for further consideration. The House-approved bill would create a panel of experts to set up a framework to offer psilocybin as a treatment option for people with...

### **More Americans are using psilocybin -- especially those with mental health conditions, study shows**

Use of psilocybin, the hallucinogenic chemical found in what is known as "magic mushrooms," has increased significantly nationwide since 2019, according to a new study led by researchers at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus and Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Safety. The study was published today in the Annals of Internal Medicine. The researchers found that psilocybin use increased across all age groups, with the largest rise in young adults and older adults. "We found that since 2019, the number of people using psilocybin has gone up sharply," said Karilynn Rockhill, PhD, co-lead author of the study...

### **Act of 1964, barring recipients from DEI activities**

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is rolling out rules that block new grants for any researcher or institution advancing programs related to diversity, equity and inclusion. The new rule also prohibits grant recipients from participating in boycotts against Israel, which includes cutting off or limiting commercial activity with Israeli companies. The new "Civil Rights term" applies to all current terms and conditions for NIH grants, according to an April 21 notice. The mandate overrules Section 4.1.2 "Civil Rights Protections" of the NIH Grants Policy Statement, which includes the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Educational Amendments...



### **Trump's addiction funding cuts hurt recovery groups, leaving moms in crisis, jobs lost**

When the Trump administration cut more than \$11 billion in COVID-era funds to states in late March, addiction recovery programs suffered swift losses. An Indiana organization that employs people in recovery to help peers with substance use disorders and mental illness was forced to lay off three workers. A Texas digital support service for people with addiction and mental illness prepared to shutter its 24/7 call line within a week. A Minnesota program focused on addiction in the East African community curtailed its outreach to vulnerable people on the street. Although the federal assistance was awarded during the COVID-19...

### **Trump's mental health and addiction problem**

At the age of 23, after years of mental health problems, addictions, and trauma, I found myself on a Philadelphia subway platform ready to end my life. Thankfully, I found help and got better. But due to the actions of the Trump administration, many others face a bleak future in dealing with these potentially fatal conditions. I am far from alone in experiencing these issues. The CDC reports that suicide is the second leading cause of death among those aged 10-34. More than 209,000 Americans die each year from alcohol, suicide and drug overdoses. One in four people will experience a mental health or substance use...

### **Listening to an avatar can make you more likely to gamble, with the amygdala playing a key role**

Expecting feedback from an avatar compared to a real human facilitates risk-taking behavior in a gambling task, and a brain region called the amygdala is central to this facilitation, according to a study published in PLOS Biology by Toshiko Tanaka and Masahiko Haruno from the National Institute of Information and Communications Technology, Japan. In virtual-reality environments, individuals can adopt various forms of avatars, projecting their behaviors into a virtual realm where their interaction partners also appear as avatars. With this shift in communication style, it is essential to understand how the use of avatars...

## **Funding Opportunities**



## **GRANTS & FUNDING**

NIH Central Resource for Grants and Funding Information

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



