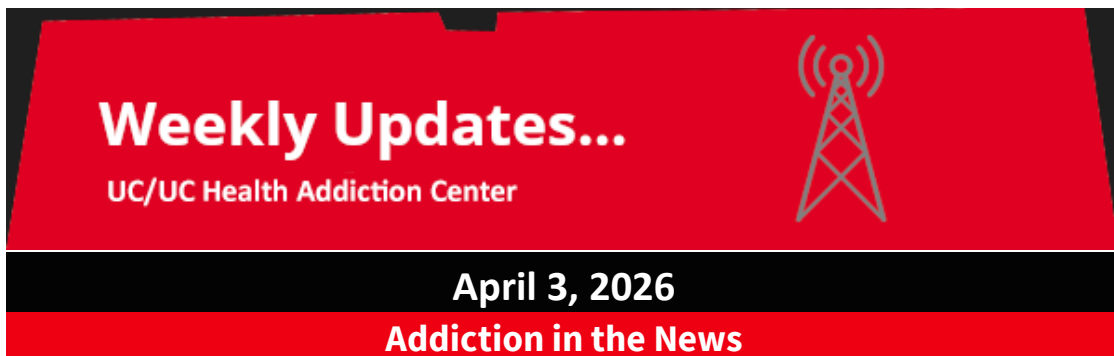


Welcome to the weekly newsletter from the University of Cincinnati/UC Health Addiction Center (UCAC)! Each newsletter includes highlights from addiction in the news topics, active funding opportunities offered by NIDA/NIAAA, and information about any new publications from UCAC researchers. Please email 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**

#### **Save the Dates! University of Cincinnati/UC Health Addiction Center to hold upcoming 2026 Summer Speaker Series**

Back by popular demand, the University of Cincinnati/UC Health Addiction Center will hold its sixth annual virtual Summer Speaker Series to highlight cutting-edge UC addiction research and UC community collaborations focused on prevention and treatment. Monthly presentations will be held on June 10 and July 8, with the final event on August 12, from noon – 1:00 PM. All presentations will be held virtually and are free and open to the public. **Featured UCAC presenters will be Dr. T. John Winhusen, Dr. Victor Schneider, and Dr. Daniel Bebo. (PDF event flyer attached)**

**[>> Register for any of the presentations](#)**

#### **Could GLP-1s help curb the opioid crisis? UC expert featured in Rolling Stone article**

The University of Cincinnati's John Winhusen was featured in a Rolling Stone article discussing the potential for GLP-1s to treat substance abuse disorders. There are three main medications used to treat substance abuse disorder, but stigma and other barriers can prevent patients from accessing the care they need. "If people can't access treatment, we're definitely going to see an increase in overdose deaths," Winhusen, PhD, principal investigator and lead author, director of the UC /UC Health Addiction Center, Donald C. Harrison endowed chair in medicine, vice

chair of addiction sciences and professor in the Department of... **(UCAC Director and Principal Investigator, Dr. T. John Winhusen)**

**Related news coverage:**

[Read the Rolling Stone article.](#)

[Read the article for free on Yahoo News.](#)

**CoM Office of Research Gallery of Awardees**

Recognizing the challenges of competing for funding to support faculty research programs, the College of Medicine Office of Research celebrates researchers in the Gallery of Awardees. The gallery honors those faculty members who have been awarded external grants of \$100,000 per year or more direct costs.

**Congratulations to the recently featured UCAC Director and UCAC Researchers!**

**Jason T. Blackard, PhD**, Professor, Department of Internal Medicine, Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology

**Award:** National Institute on Drug Abuse R01

**Project Title:** Single Cell Opioid (Fentanyl) Responses in the Context of HIV

**Project Period:** 7/15/2025–3/31/2030

**Summary:** Fentanyl is now involved in the vast majority of opioid overdose deaths, yet its effects on immune cells and viral infections remain poorly understood. Building on prior NIDA-funded work, this project uses multi-omics analyses of well-characterized patient samples to define how fentanyl alters immune cell gene expression and microRNA profiles in people with HIV and/or HCV. These insights will inform strategies to reduce viral reactivation and improve treatment outcomes in populations affected by opioid use. Collaborators include Krishna M. Roskin, PhD, Department of Pediatrics, CCHMC.

**Caroline Freiermuth, MD, MHS**, Associate Professor, Department of Emergency Medicine

**Award:** Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Award

**Project Title:** IH26 Integrated Harm Reduction

**Project Period:** 9/30/2025–9/29/2026

**Summary:** The University of Cincinnati Early Intervention Program works to ensure naloxone is widely available across Hamilton and Butler Counties to prevent fatal opioid overdoses. Through emergency department and community outreach, Health Promotion Advocates identify high-risk individuals, provide education and referrals, and distribute harm-reduction resources. With fentanyl increasingly present in the local drug supply, expanding naloxone access is critical to reducing overdose-related morbidity and mortality.

**Teresa M. Reyes, PhD**, Senior Associate Dean for Basic and Translational Research, Professor, Department of Pharmacology, Physiology, and Neurobiology

**Award:** National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke R21

**Project Title:** Role of Perinatal Testosterone in Programming Behavioral and Astrocyte Responses to Early-Life Chemotherapy

**Project Period:** 8/1/2025–7/31/2027

**Summary:** This research investigates how sex differences in early brain development—particularly a perinatal testosterone surge in males—may alter astrocyte calcium signaling and increase vulnerability to later cognitive deficits. Using a translational mouse model of childhood acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) plus chemotherapy, the work examines why males show greater long-term impairments in executive function and memory while females appear more resilient. By combining astrocyte-specific gene analyses, calcium imaging, and advanced behavioral testing, the study aims to pinpoint astrocyte mechanisms that drive cognitive dysfunction and reveal new targets for intervention after early-life cancer treatment.

**T. John Winhusen, PhD,** Vice Chair of Addiction Sciences, Donald C. Harrison Endowed Chair in Medicine, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience.

**Award:** National Institute on Drug Abuse CTN-0080-A-1 (SUCCESS Study)

**Project Title:** Successful Recruitment and Retention in a Randomized Controlled Trial of Pregnant People with OUD

**Project Period:** 3/1/2024–2/28/2026

**Summary:** This study identifies strategies to improve recruitment and retention of pregnant individuals with opioid use disorder in randomized controlled clinical trials.

### **Overdose deaths in Hamilton County hit lowest point in over a decade**

The Hamilton County Addiction Response Coalition says drug overdose deaths in the county have dropped to their lowest point in more than a decade. Data from the Hamilton County Coroner's Office shows there were 194 overdose deaths in 2025, a 30% decrease from 2024, when there were 277 deaths reported, and a significant drop from the county's peak in 2017, when 570 overdose deaths were recorded. Meagan Guthrie, director of Hamilton County's Office of Addiction Response, says this new data shows great progress, as death totals have declined each year since 2021, but there's still work to do. "We are now back to levels...

### **'Very much a blessing': New Tri-State apartments open to help women after recovery program**

CINCINNATI (WKRC) - A dozen newly renovated apartments are opening in Mount Auburn, offering affordable housing designed to help women rebuilding their lives after addiction. The apartments are part of City Gospel Mission's program for women who have graduated from its women's recovery program. Lucretia Bowman, who helped launch the program about 30 years ago, toured the updated units and described the project as a key next step for women transitioning out of recovery housing. Bowman said her commitment to the work grew out of her own experience. "I did 20 years in and out of prison myself," said Bowman. She...

### **Opioid deaths dropped in 2024, and Ohio's decline was even steeper: report**

CLEVELAND, Ohio — Opioid overdose deaths in the U.S. fell sharply from 2023 to 2024, driven largely by decreases in deaths involving fentanyl, according to a new KFF report. Nationally, the total number of deaths dropped about 32% from about 79,000 in 2023 to 54,000 in 2024, the report said. Ohio's drop was even steeper, with deaths falling about 45% from nearly 4,000 in 2023 to about 2,200 in 2024, KFF said. The state's opioid overdose death rate was 20.1 per 100,000 population in 2024. West Virginia in 2024 had the the highest rate (38.6 per 100,000) among U.S. states. Nebraska had the lowest rate at 3.3 per 100,000...

### **Synthetic Drugs Fuel Chaos Inside Ohio Prisons**

A yearlong investigation found that drug-soaked paper, sold in confetti-sized hits, is now the most commonly found drug in Ohio prisons, fueling violence and accounting for more deaths than any other substance. The highly addictive drug is smuggled in by staff and visitors, tossed over fences and dropped in by drones. Prisons are struggling to stem the flow of drugs, spending millions on tighter security, but an unknown number of employees and contractors continue to sneak significant amounts of drugs through the front entrance with little consequence. The crisis of synthetic drugs in Ohio prisons has led to a spike in...

### **Kentucky could greenlight ibogaine research to treat PTSD, addiction**

A bill setting up a framework for researching the medical benefits of the powerful psychedelic drug ibogaine is nearing final passage in the Kentucky General Assembly. GOP sponsor Sen. Donald Douglas of Nicholasville told a House committee ibogaine is the next frontier in confronting Kentucky's ongoing opioid crisis — 1,410 Kentuckians died from a drug overdose in 2024. "It may be just the first step, but it has the possibility in the future of producing one of the greatest positive impacts on our society since antibiotics," said Douglas, who is a pain medicine doctor. At the moment, ibogaine is classified as Schedule I, which...

## **National News**

### **Stress and addiction: New research reveals what connects them**

Why do stressful moments so often push people toward habits like drinking? A new study from Texas A&M University offers one of the clearest answers yet, identifying a direct connection inside the brain that links stress to addiction-related behaviors. The work shows how alcohol disrupts the natural stress-response system, making it harder for the brain to adapt or make good decisions. The team, led by Dr. Jun Wang, professor in the Department of Neuroscience and Experimental Therapeutics in the Naresh K. Vashisht College of Medicine, published findings in eLife. The researchers found a pathway that connects the brain's...

### **Occasional heavy drinking may triple the risk of liver damage, research suggests**

People may assume that if they drink lightly during the week or month, heavy drinking on the occasional Friday or Saturday may not cause their liver harm. New research suggests otherwise, according to a Keck Medicine of USC study published in *Clinical Gastroenterology and Hepatology*. Researchers discovered that people with metabolic dysfunction–associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD), the most common liver condition in the country affecting one-in-three adults, face significantly higher risk of liver fibrosis, or harmful scarring of the liver, if they engage in episodic heavy drinking. Episodic heavy drinking is four or more...

### **Craving in addiction may alter how the brain makes decisions**

For people with an addiction, craving—the strong desire for a substance—can affect their decision-making, new research shows. And how craving affects a decision can depend on what's at stake. The finding, published in *Nature Mental Health*, is important, say researchers, because understanding craving is key to understanding—and treating—addiction itself. "Addiction is very hard to treat, and one of the reasons is that we don't fully understand the craving linked with it," says senior author Xiaosi Gu, Ph.D., professor of psychiatry and director of the Computational Psychiatry Unit at Yale School of Medicine (YSM). While...

### **Exclusive-US nicotine pouch fast-track scheme slowed by worries over youth, new users**

LONDON/NEW YORK, April 1 (Reuters) - Popular nicotine pouch products have yet to be cleared for sale in the United States despite a fast-track Food and Drug Administration scheme, as agency scientists hesitate to authorise them due to potential risks to new users, including children, three sources told Reuters. New tobacco products like pouches, which users insert under their lip to get a nicotine buzz, must be authorised by the FDA in order to be legally sold in the U.S., the world's largest market for smoking alternatives worth some \$22 billion. When granting licences, the agency weighs whether a product can help smokers...

### **Scientists say the evidence is clear: E-cigarettes beat patches and gum in helping smokers quit**

A comprehensive review of global research on smoking cessation suggests that e-cigarettes containing nicotine may help more people quit smoking than other commonly used methods. These include nicotine replacement therapy (nicotine patches, gum, lozenges, etc.) as well as non-nicotine e-cigarettes and behavioral support programs. The analysis brings together findings from multiple systematic reviews to provide a clearer picture of what works best for quitting smoking. In total, researchers combined results from fourteen systematic reviews conducted between 2014 and 2023, making the evidence easier to interpret and...

### **NIH researchers discover pain-relieving drug with minimal addictive properties**

Researchers at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have identified a novel, highly potent opioid that shows potential as a therapy for both pain and opioid use disorder. In a study published in *Nature*, the team observed the new drug's effect in laboratory animals. They showed that it has high pain-relieving effects without causing respiratory depression, tolerance or other indicators of potential for addiction in humans. "Opioid pain medications are essential for medical purposes, but can lead to addiction and overdose," said Nora D. Volkow, M.D., director of NIH's National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). "Developing a...

### **This new therapy turns off pain without opioids or addiction**

A new preclinical study has identified a gene therapy that directly targets pain-processing areas in the brain while avoiding the addiction risks linked to narcotic drugs. The findings could offer new hope to more than 50 million Americans living with chronic pain. Living with chronic pain is often compared to having a radio stuck at full volume, where the noise never fades no matter what you try. Opioids such as morphine can lower that volume, but they also act on other parts of the brain, which can lead to serious side effects and a high risk of addiction. Researchers say this new gene therapy works more like a precise volume...

### **Recovery-oriented program may significantly improve quality of life for people with opioid-use disorder**

The community-based opioid treatment program Honor's HEROES at UTHealth Houston may significantly improve treatment retention and quality of life for people with opioid-use disorder, even among those facing major barriers such as homelessness, lack of insurance, and prior overdose, according to a new study published in the *Journal of Addiction Medicine*. Nationally, the opioid crisis continues to take a devastating toll. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly 80,000 people in the U.S. died from opioid-involved overdoses in 2023, representing 76% of all overdose deaths. Although the...

### **The brain remembers: The hidden cost of young adult substance use**

Young adults who heavily use substances may report significantly poorer memory decades later, a new University of Michigan study suggests. Researchers tracked how frequently participants reported binge drinking and daily—or near-daily—use of alcohol, cannabis and cigarettes between the ages of 18 and 30. They then compared those patterns with self-reported poor memory at ages 50 to 65. The study was published in the *Journal of Aging and Health*. "Substance use has both acute and long-term effects on health and well-being," said Megan Patrick, research professor at the Institute for Social Research and principal...

### **Genes tied to impulse control play a major role in addiction risk**

Most of the genetic risk for developing a substance use disorder comes from genes that broadly affect how our brains process rewards, regulate impulses and weigh

consequences—not from genes that specifically influence substance use disorder or any single drug. Researchers of a Rutgers Health-led study headed by Holly Poore, a faculty instructor of psychiatry at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, analyzed genetic data from previously published genome-wide association studies totaling more than 2.2 million individuals to understand how genes shape vulnerability to alcohol, tobacco, cannabis...

### **Antidepressant Reduces Meth Addiction in Trial**

Use of the antidepressant mirtazapine in routine clinical practice reduced methamphetamine use in adults with methamphetamine use disorder, a phase III randomized trial showed. In participants who used methamphetamine a median of 24 days over the past 28 days, the mean reduction in days of methamphetamine use from baseline to week 12 was greater in the mirtazapine group than in the placebo group (7 vs 4.8 days of 28 days,  $P=0.02$ ), reported Rebecca McKetin, PhD, of the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre at the University of New South Wales Sydney in Australia, and colleagues in *JAMA Psychiatry*. Methamph...

### **Treating addiction**

Addiction is a serious public health problem in the United States. Nearly 80,000 people nationwide died of drug overdoses in 2024 alone. But drug overdoses are just one of the many harms caused by addiction and substance use disorders. About 178,000 people in the United States die from excessive drinking each year. Alcohol use disorder increases the risk of unintentional injuries, car accidents, and suicide. It also contributes to cancer, heart disease, liver disease, birth defects, and developmental disabilities. Cigarette smoking kills more than 480,000 Americans each year. Tobacco and nicotine addiction contribute to cancer, heart...

### **We Have a Substance Use Prevention Problem**

Every week in the pediatric emergency department, I watch the consequences of adolescent substance use arrive through our doors. Overdoses. Acute intoxication. Psychiatric crises triggered by substances that started as experimentation years earlier. And almost every time, somewhere in the history, there is a moment when prevention could have worked -- and didn't. We have invested heavily in school-based prevention curricula. We have trained teachers and counselors. We have funded awareness campaigns. And yet, adolescents continue to initiate substance use at younger ages, with fewer of them accessing...

### **Integrated psychological treatment improves outcomes in dual disorders**

When an addiction and a mental health disorder coexist—a condition known as dual disorder—scientific evidence indicates that integrated psychological treatment improves clinical outcomes and reduces the risk of relapse. Now, studies published in the *Journal of Clinical Medicine* confirm that integrated psychological treatment, in which the same team simultaneously addresses both the substance use disorder and the other mental health disorder, is more effective than treating

them separately. The study, carried out by an international consensus research promoted by the World Association on Dual...

### **Some Patients With ADHD and Addiction History Missing Out**

For millions of teens living with ADHD, the transition into adulthood adds more complexity and temptation to daily life. Substance abuse, on top of ADHD, can become a tricky landscape to navigate. New research from Penn State College of Medicine reveals that the very patients who could benefit from ADHD medication the most — those also struggling with drug or alcohol addiction — are the least likely to receive it. The study — published recently in the Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry — analyzed the health records of more than 1.2 million people between 15 and 25 years of age with ADHD. The...

### **Study uses AI to rank 10 factors tied to positive substance use recovery outcomes**

Researchers at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa are using artificial intelligence and machine learning (AI/ML) to better understand what improves outcomes for individuals receiving treatment for substance use disorders. A study published in the Journal of Prevention Science analyzed more than 7.9 million publicly available treatment records across the U.S. to identify patterns in services, recovery, and outcomes. The research was led by Treena Becker, an assistant researcher with the UH Center on Aging, and Alberto Gonzalez-Martinez, a UH computer scientist. "We believe our research findings can help states and local...

### **Kids who lose a parent to homicide, suicide or drug overdose face higher mortality risk**

Childhood deaths are significantly higher among children who lose a parent to drug overdose, homicide, or suicide compared to the general child population, a new University of Michigan study found. The research, published in JAMA Network Open, investigated the link between specific types of parental loss and the subsequent risk of mortality for children in Michigan, said study lead author Sean Esteban McCabe, professor at the U-M School of Nursing. The study found that bereaved children who experienced a parental death from one of the three preventable causes accounted for 150 excess childhood deaths in the...

### **Plunge in Antiviral Scripts for Hep C Points to Unmet Treatment Needs**

Hailed as breakthrough treatments at their 2013 debut, the number of direct-acting antiviral (DAA) prescriptions to treat hepatitis C virus (HCV) infections has plummeted by nearly two-thirds in the last decade, according to a cross-sectional analysis of U.S. prescription data. After peaking at 185,677 DAA courses in 2015, prescriptions dropped 63% by 2025, to 68,523. The age of patients taking DAAs also shifted over that period; those older than 61 years accounted for 41.8% of DAA-treated patients in 2015, but that percentage shrank to 26% by 2025, reported researchers led by Sanjay Kishore, MD, of the University of Virginia in...

### **Sources: White House to propose 20 percent cut to NIH funding**

The White House is expected to ask Congress to cut National Institutes of Health spending by 20 percent in the president's fiscal 2027 budget request, according to multiple sources with knowledge of the planning. The budget request, slated for release next week, reflects President Donald Trump's policy priorities and acts as a guide to lawmakers as they draft appropriations bills for the fiscal year that begins Oct. 1. Cuts of that size would be a step down from the 40 percent reductions the Trump White House proposed last year, but would still represent a massive blow to the biomedical research agency, and one that would...

### **'Public health crisis': Experts weigh the stakes of youth gambling in America**

Rob Minnick was a New Jersey high school student scooping ice cream for minimum wage when he started gambling through a bookie. The draw, he recalls, seemed obvious. "When I saw this concept that I could make \$100 on a Phillies game versus working two days at the store, it was like, 'Why would I ever work again?'" said Minnick, now 27. Over the next six years, Minnick went into debt six times. As his gambling habit grew, he took on a second job to support his addiction. He says he placed wagers, on average, for at least eight hours a day. Minnick is part of the first generation to grow up in a world where gambling has come...

## **Funding Opportunities**



### **GRANTS & FUNDING**

NIH Central Resource for Grants and Funding Information

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

### **UC Foundation Funding Opportunities**

Please contact Carol Russell at (513) 556-6169 or [russecg@foundation.uc.edu](mailto:russecg@foundation.uc.edu) at **least 5 business days before the deadline**, prior to applying to the below opportunities, to ensure coordination and to facilitate assistance with approaches.

### **Waletzky Award to Recognize Researcher for Work in Drug Addiction**

**Deadline: May 7, 2026, 5:00 PM (Nominations made by SFN members)**

The Society for Neuroscience (SFN) is taking nominations for the Jacob P. Waletzky Award, given to a mid-career scientist (within 15 years of his/her PhD or MD degree) whose independent research has led to significant conceptual and empirical contributions to the understanding of drug addiction. Recipients receive a \$30,000 prize and complimentary SFN registration, transportation (economy air or ground), and two nights hotel accommodations for the SfN annual meeting. The SFN president presents the prize at a lecture at the meeting. Both basic and clinical

researchers are eligible for the award. Future plans to continue to make significant contributions to addiction research and treatment is one of the selection criteria. This award is endowed by the Waletzky Award Prize Fund and the Waletzky Family. For nomination materials and other information, see the website.

### **American Psychological Foundation to Award McCary Psychoanalysis Grant**

**Deadline: August 31, 2026**

The American Psychological Foundation is taking applications for the Division 39 (Society for Psychoanalysis and Psychoanalytic Psychology) Marsha D. McCary Fund for Psychoanalysis. Founded by Marsha D. McCary, the fund is dedicated to increasing public awareness of the value and applications of psychoanalytic principles and treatments. It supports initiatives that highlight the relevance of psychoanalytic thought in addressing clinical, organizational, and social challenges. The grant offers one award of \$11,500. Sponsored by the American Psychological Foundation (APF) and Division 39 (Society for Psychoanalysis and Psychoanalytic Psychology), the funding aims to support innovative efforts that communicate psychoanalytic insights to broader audiences. Particular emphasis is placed on projects that serve underrepresented or underserved populations, as well as those led by early-career professionals and students from diverse backgrounds. To apply, candidates must submit a comprehensive set of materials, including a project proposal outlining the goals, scope, and intended impact of the project, as well as a clear project timeline. A detailed budget with justification is required to demonstrate how funds will be allocated. Applicants must also provide a current curriculum vitae and two letters of support that speak to the quality and feasibility of the proposed work. Applications will be evaluated based on their potential to increase public awareness of project, and the effectiveness of the proposed use of funds. Strong applications will clearly demonstrate both innovation and practical impact, showing how the project will meaningfully contribute to the field and to public understanding.

## **UCAC Research Members New Publications**

### **Collaboration with community partners to expand naloxone access in the HEALing Communities Study**

Tim Ingram · Sofia Rubi · Sierra Dantzer · Jolene DeFiore-Hyrmer · Jennifer L. Brown · Joel Sprunger · T. John Winhusen · Michael S. Lyons

*Journal of the American Pharmacists Association*

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.japh.2026.103044>

#### **ABSTRACT**

**Background:** Increasing naloxone availability is one of the most effective ways to combat opioid-related overdose and death.

**Objective:** We describe the implementation of a community-based hub-and-spoke model and highlight supportive policies and procedures to address implementation barriers to reduce fatal opioid overdoses. We aim to provide insight into future naloxone distribution efforts.

**Methods:** The “hub-and-spoke” model functioned as an extension of the Ohio Department of Health's Project DAWN (Deaths Avoided With Naloxone) by establishing secondary Project DAWN sites as part of the HEALing Communities Study in Ohio. State-sponsored naloxone distribution efforts ensured that naloxone was freely and readily accessible through local health departments and various community organizations.

**Results:** This initiative increased the distribution of sustainable naloxone to a wider range of locations, such as workplaces, recreational areas, and places of worship. Ohio's approach exemplifies a coordinated effort, uniting state government and community leaders in a shared commitment to expand access to lifesaving medications to combat the opioid epidemic.

**Conclusion:** The “hub-and-spoke” model offers a community-based strategy to extend resources across different organizations and enhance the local infrastructure. Discussions facilitated by experts in the field and trained individuals can combat stigmatizing beliefs within the community. Standardizing medical protocols and promoting flexible legislation can significantly improve distribution efficiency.

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