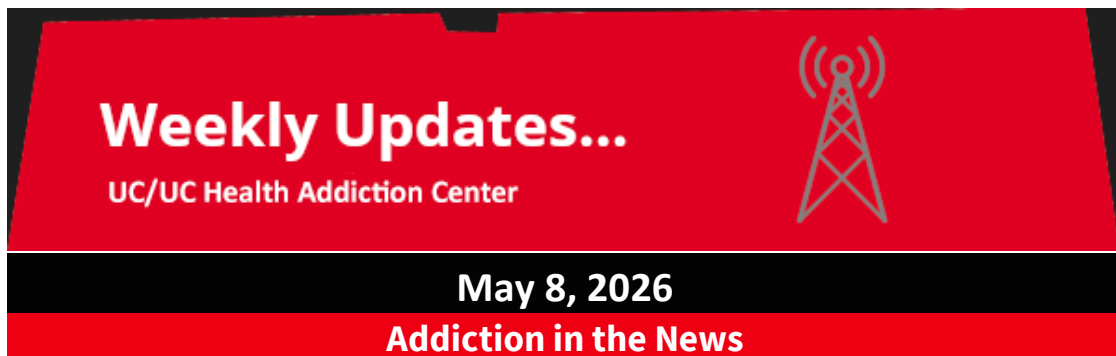


Welcome to the weekly newsletter from the University of Cincinnati/UC Health Addiction Center (UCAC)! Each newsletter includes highlights from addiction in the news topics, active funding opportunities offered by NIDA/NIAAA, and information about any new publications from UCAC researchers. Please email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

Restoring hope against substance use disorder in Athens

Southeastern Ohio has been disproportionately affected by substance use disorders, such as opioid use disorder for decades. The Appalachian region of Ohio, once booming with industrial labor, saw a proliferation of opioid prescriptions following the loss of industry during the end of the 20th century, according to the National Library of Medicine. Organizations like Athens HOPE acknowledge the presence of opioids in the area, as well as lead conversations surrounding communal efforts to provide education and support for Athens residents who are struggling with substance use. In 1996, the Food and Drug...

Kentucky overdose deaths hit lowest point since 2014

FRANKFORT, Ky. — Overdose deaths in Kentucky declined for a fourth straight year in 2025, according to a news release from Gov. Andy Beshear's office. The release said overdose deaths fell 22.9% in 2025 compared with 2024 and were down 50.8% from 2021, when Kentucky recorded its highest number of overdose deaths. Gov. Andy Beshear, D-Ky., said the 2025 Kentucky Drug Overdose Fatality Report showed 1,110 Kentuckians died of a drug overdose in 2025. "We mourn all 1,101 Kentuckians who lost their lives to a drug overdose last year. They were a mom, dad, brother, sister, child or neighbor – and most importantly..."

National News

Game-Changer? Wegovy Cuts Heavy Drinking in Alcohol Addiction Trial

People with obesity and alcohol use disorder had fewer heavy drinking days while on semaglutide (Wegovy), a Danish randomized trial showed. Alongside cognitive behavioral therapy, adults receiving a 2.4-mg weekly dose of the GLP-1 receptor agonist had a 41.1-percentage-point reduction in heavy drinking days after 26 weeks compared with a 26.4-percentage-point drop for those assigned to placebo (P=0.0015), reported Anders Fink-Jensen, DMSc, of Copenhagen University Hospital–Bispebjerg and Frederiksberg, and colleagues. Semaglutide-treated adults also showed greater improvements across...

Study urges alcohol drinkers to be aware of emotional state

While, historically, men in the United States have tended to drink more than women, that trend has reversed over the last decade, prompting a University of Rhode Island behavioral science psychology student to study the implications of the shift, and examine how emotion and craving are impacting alcohol use among women. Alcohol use disorder (AUD) has increased in women by 84% over the past 10 years compared to a 35% increase in men, according to the National Library of Medicine. The increase in female drinking is alarming, given that women experience greater alcohol-related health consequences compared...

What we know—and what we don't—about marijuana's health effects

Medical marijuana could finally be inching toward federal approval. After decades of advocacy from cannabis proponents and the marijuana industry, the Trump administration is moving to ease some cannabis restrictions and boost research on the drug's therapeutic uses. Most U.S. states—40 in all—and the Washington, D.C., already allow medical marijuana as a treatment for dozens of conditions, from arthritis to inflammatory bowel disease, hepatitis C, cancer, glaucoma, Alzheimer's, and more. But despite cannabis's popularity, experts say that the scientific evidence as to whether it can actually treat many of these...

Here's What Medical Marijuana Can Do for Older Patients

Older patients represent the group in which cannabis use is increasing most rapidly. The rates of use in this population doubled from 2005 to 2015 and roughly doubled once again from 2015 to 2018. As of 2023, roughly 7% of adults 65 and older reported using the drug in the past month. The earlier numbers might have been an undercount, however, as some people in this generation may not have felt comfortable admitting to using cannabis because of lingering stigma. But according to one study of patients ages 50 years and over, "Attitudes toward cannabis have changed over time with four of five survey respondents currently holding...

First fruit-flavored e-cigarettes for adults authorized by FDA

The Food and Drug Administration on Tuesday announced its first authorization of fruit-flavored electronic cigarettes intended for adult smokers, a major policy shift that comes after months of appeals to President Donald Trump from the vaping industry. The decision is certain to be opposed by health groups and parent organizations that have long pointed to flavors as the driver behind underage vaping in the U.S. But the federal action comes as teen vaping rates have dropped to a 10-year low and manufacturers have pushed the Republican administration to loosen restrictions on their products. Vaping companies have long...

To combat the youth vaping epidemic, AI can help determine which cessation strategies work best

Nationwide, young people ages 18–24 are the heaviest users of e-cigarettes, with 38.4% of youth reporting habitual use. E-cigarettes are also very popular in Western New York, with significantly higher use than in New York City. While potential health risks are widely known, people find it hard to stop vaping, and the younger they are, the harder it is. These factors led University at Buffalo cancer researchers to launch a study on why young people vape, and the best ways to get them to stop. They conducted an online survey of 119 people who vape, with three quarters of them ages 21–26. The results were published in PLOS Digital...

Q&A: Is nicotine really good for you?

Science is lying, and nicotine is good for you, according to a wave of new health and wellness influencers, including celebrity fitness coach and former "Biggest Loser" host Jillian Michaels and Andrew Huberman, a tenured professor at Stanford University's School of Medicine, best known for his wellness podcast, "The Huberman Lab." These influencers, along with "biohackers" who trawl online forums for wellness tips, say nicotine is a natural substance that can boost cognitive function, prevent diseases like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's and even help you live longer. They promote the use of nicotine pouches, like ZYN, or nicotine...

Trump administration's drug strategy is at odds with recent actions on funding, policy

The White House's new strategy for addressing the nation's drug crisis calls for a number of consensus public health measures: the overdose-reversal medication naloxone, medication-assisted treatment, and test strips used to detect fentanyl or other drug supply adulterants. But the May 4 document appears to run counter to many of the Trump administration's latest drug policy actions. In particular, it comes just days after the administration issued new restrictions on using federal dollars to distribute test strips and warned against the use of medication-assisted treatment unless accompanied by other services, like counseling. The...

Kratom Use Explodes in the US, With Life-Changing Consequences

Kratom has quietly moved from a niche herbal product to a widely used substance in the United States, drawing increasing scrutiny from scientists and regulators. Derived from a Southeast Asian tree, it is often marketed for pain relief or mood enhancement, but at higher doses, it can act on the body in ways similar to opioids. Now, a study published in *Addiction* suggests that as kratom's popularity has grown, so too have reports of harm, with poison center data revealing a sharp rise in exposures and serious health complications over the past decade. According to the findings, reported kratom exposures surged from just 19 cases...

NIH awards \$3.9 million grant to develop a non-opioid pain treatment

The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), has awarded a \$3.9 million grant to a multi-institutional team led by scientists at Sanford Burnham Prebys Medical Discovery Institute to develop a non-opioid pain therapeutic and advance it into a Phase 1 clinical trial. The effort is headed by Steven H. Olson, PhD, executive director of medicinal chemistry at Sanford Burnham Prebys, in collaboration with co-principal investigators Ru-Rong Ji, PhD, Distinguished Professor of Anesthesiology at Duke University, and Lauren M. Slosky, PhD, assistant professor at...

Opioid overdose survivors face higher risk of death than previously thought, study finds

After an emergency department visit for an opioid overdose, 9% of individuals died and 21% experienced a repeat opioid overdose in the following year, according to a new study from ICES and the Center for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). The risks were particularly high within seven and 30 days after being discharged from an emergency department. The mortality estimates were higher than in previous studies, which found non-fatal opioid overdoses to be approximately 6%. The study has been published in *JAMA*. "Most older studies were conducted before the introduction of fentanyl into the unregulated..."

Big Brothers Big Sisters linked to lower violence and substance use among youth

Mentorship programs are valued by parents and communities for their ability to improve the self-esteem and relationships of youth participants. Now, new research from the University of Illinois Chicago shows that kids who participate in Big Brothers Big Sisters, the oldest and largest such program in the United States, are less likely to engage in violent behavior or substance use than those who don't. For the randomized control study, published in the *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, UIC researchers followed the trajectories of more than 1,300 kids ages 10 and older through four years of interviews, surveys, and...

Addiction Policy Forum Webinar: Evidence-Based Strategies to Prevent Addiction: Perspectives from the National Institute on Drug Abuse

Tuesday, May 19 – 1:00 PM – 2:30 PM

There is ongoing research to develop effective, sustainable, and scalable strategies to prevent the initiation of substance use and its progression to substance use disorders, as well as prevent other related health consequences. Evidence-based prevention interventions - particularly those implemented at key developmental stages can have a profound and lasting impact. In addition to reducing substance use, prevention approaches can improve long-term health and help prevent a range of adverse outcomes for individuals, families, and communities. This webinar will provide an overview of prevention research supported by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). Participants will gain insight into examples of evidence-based approaches and the infrastructure needed to support them. The webinar will also present recent scientific advances and future directions in prevention research and innovation.

Funding Opportunities



PAR-27-081

Discovery of in vivo Chemical Probes for the Nervous System (R01 Clinical Trial Not Allowed)

UCAC Research Members New Publications

Experiences of pregnant and postpartum people of color engaged in a randomized clinical trial of medication to treat opioid use disorder during pregnancy: A “Positive Outliers” analysis

Alexindra Wheeler, Erin Major, Julyvette Vazquez, Latisha Goullaud, Frankie Kropp, Shelly F. Greenfield, Grace Humiston, Marcela C. Smid, Bettina B. Hoepfner, John T. Winhusen, Davida M. Schiff

Journal of Substance Use & Addiction Treatment

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.josat.2026.209988>

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Racial and ethnic inequities persist in medication treatment initiation and adherence for pregnant and postpartum people with opioid use disorder (OUD). Our objective was to understand the experiences of “positive outliers,” specifically pregnant and postpartum people of color with OUD who utilized medication treatment and engaged in a randomized clinical trial for buprenorphine despite historical, cultural, and structural barriers.

Methods: We conducted two sets of semi-structured qualitative interviews. First, trained peers with lived expertise as mothers in recovery interviewed individuals who identified with a non-white race and/or ethnicity and enrolled in the Medication Treatment for OUD in Expectant Mothers (MOMs) trial (NCT03918850). Second, we interviewed principal investigators, clinicians, and research coordinators from the 13 MOMs trial sites. We used an inductive thematic approach informed by the Social Ecological Model of Racism and Anti-Racism. Transcripts were double-coded and reviewed until consensus was reached. Preliminary findings from participant and staff interviews were merged and triangulated with peers to inform theme development.

Results: We completed 17 interviews with MOMs trial participants from 7 sites. Participants identified as Hispanic (29%), Black non-Hispanic (24%), multi-racial Hispanic (18%), multi-racial non-Hispanic (18%), and American Indian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander (12%). Thirty-two interviews with trial staff were also completed. Three themes emerged: (1) Although some participants expected racist treatment and research exploitation, all participants interviewed reported non-discriminatory, non-judgmental care within the MOMs trial; (2) Compassionate care, frequent, personalized, and integrated encounters, and emotional support helped counteract prior stigmatizing and discriminatory health care interactions, enabling participants of color to feel particularly supported, trusted, and empowered during the MOMs trial; and (3) Despite pervasive cultural stigma around addiction and concerns about taking an investigational drug while pregnant, participants expressed that pregnancy status, care team trust, and transparent communication with MOMs trial staff encouraged medication utilization and adherence.

Conclusion: Facilitators of successful engagement in the MOMs trial and retention in medication treatment among pregnant and postpartum people of color with OUD included non-judgmental care, sustained trust, and frequent contact. Key perinatal OUD clinical interventions and trial improvements include personalized communication and scheduling flexibility to promote engagement of marginalized populations.

Main Outcome and Measure: Opioid use disorder; Racism; Stigma; Qualitative research; Pregnancy; Postpartum; Clinical trial.

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