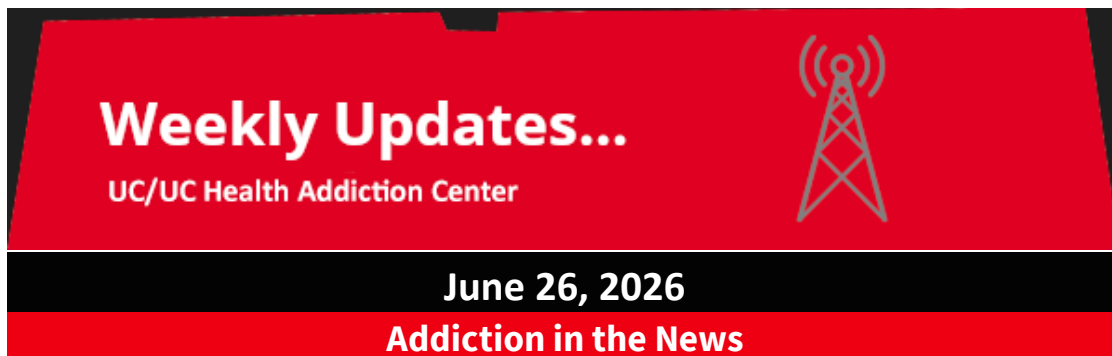


Welcome to the weekly newsletter from the University of Cincinnati/UC Health Addiction Center (UCAC)! Each newsletter includes highlights from addiction in the news topics, active funding opportunities offered by NIDA/NIAAA, and information about any new publications from UCAC researchers. Please email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

University of Cincinnati/UC Health Addiction Center Second 2026 Summer Speaker Series Event

Join us for the second of three-monthly virtual Summer Speaker Series events, Wednesday, July 8 at 12pm on "Characterizing Heavy Drinking in Midlife and Older Adults via Virtual Reality Alcohol Administration and Qualitative Interviews." The session will be presented by Victor J. Schneider, PhD, UCAC Research Member, with co-presenter Christian C. Garcia, PhD. This project uses a unique virtual reality alcohol administration approach to recreate realistic alcohol-related situations and explore how midlife and older adults respond. All presentations will be held virtually and are free and open to the public. **(PDF event flyer attached)**

>> Register for any of the presentations

Addiction specialists warn of rising sports betting problems

CINCINNATI (WKRC) - With World Cup games in full swing, addiction specialists in Ohio are raising concerns about the growth of sports betting and its impact on problem gambling. Sports betting became legal in Ohio three years ago, and Dr. Chris Tuell, the clinical director of addiction services at the Lindner Center of Hope in Mason, said he is worried about what he has seen since then. "This is unfortunately a perfect storm that is just feeding this addiction and it's right in our pocket," Tuell said. Tuell said calls to the Ohio Problem Gambling Hotline are up 50% since sports betting was legalized. One of his main concerns is that young...

Ohio researchers warn of another hidden danger of IV drug use: fungus

A team of microbiologists has discovered a risk of microbes in intravenous drug use. Researchers at Bowling Green State University studied the contents of 50 syringes from the Northwest Ohio Safe Services' needle exchange program, where people who use drugs can swap out used needles for clean ones. In addition to a mix of narcotics, they discovered a drug-resistant fungus that can cause serious infections. "If the drugs don't kill you, the microbes might," said biological sciences professor Hans Wildschutte. "If you're injecting those directly into your vein, that's a problem." Wildschutte said the researchers found...

Opioid settlement money aims to battle addiction in rural Kentucky

WHITESBURG, Ky. — Drugs and the consequences of addiction are woven into the fabric of Jamie Madden's life. Her earliest memory is of standing on the passenger seat of her dad's car as a toddler, wearing a peach-colored blouse, while he drove from their Kentucky home to Florida to pick up drugs. On a stop for a burger, she met Ronald McDonald. "I grew up with the impression that that's how you paid your bills," Madden said. "That's how your kids got things." By 16, she was addicted to pain pills. By 30, methamphetamine. She lost custody of two children and gave up two more for adoption at birth. She served time in the county...

National News

Study finds ~15 percent of U.S. pregnant women report drinking in past 30 days

From 2021 to 2024, 15.2% of U.S. pregnant women reported drinking alcohol in the past 30 days, according to research published in the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. Shawn A. Thomas, Ph.D., from the CDC in Atlanta, and colleagues estimated the prevalence of self-reported current drinking (one or more alcoholic drinks during the past 30 days), binge drinking (four or more alcoholic drinks on at least one occasion during the past 30 days), and heavy drinking (eight or more alcoholic drinks within one week during the past 30 days) among U.S. pregnant women aged 18 to 49 years...

Clues to psilocybin's epigenetic effects on people with alcohol use disorder

Some psychedelics, psychoactive substances that alter people's mood, perceptions and mental processes, were recently found to be promising alternative treatments for some mental health disorders. The substance that has attracted the most interest so far is psilocybin, a naturally occurring hallucinogenic compound found in more than 200 types of mushrooms. Past studies have found that psilocybin can help reduce the symptoms experienced by some patients with treatment-resistant depression and substance use disorders, including alcohol use disorder (AUD). However, the biological mechanisms...

New study attempts to reconcile conflicting findings on benefits vs. risks of alcohol consumption

Studies of alcohol's effects on health have offered contradictory findings, with some suggesting a glass of red wine a day is beneficial and others saying even a drop of booze is too much. A new review attempting to clarify the risks finds more than 60 diseases, based on the World Health Organization's International Classification of Diseases, are 100% attributable to consuming alcohol. But the review also finds that some of the damage can be slowed or reversed by cutting down or quitting drinking. Sinclair Carr, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Epidemiology at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and the...

Middle-aged women drink more, know less about breast cancer risk

Middle-aged women have the highest levels of problematic alcohol use, a new national survey shows, yet they may be the least aware that drinking can increase breast cancer risk. Researchers questioned 2,200 women, 18 and older, about their drinking habits and mental health, as well as their knowledge and beliefs about alcohol and breast cancer. The results revealed a striking paradox: Middle-aged women reported the highest levels of problematic drinking while also showing the lowest awareness of its link to breast cancer. "Research consistently shows that breast cancer risk increases as alcohol consumption increases..."

As youth tobacco use declines, flavored e-cigarettes and nicotine pouches are a continued concern

WASHINGTON, D.C., June 24, 2026 — The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) this week shared findings from the 2025 National Youth Tobacco Survey (NYTS). The American Heart Association, a global force changing the future of health for all, issued the following statement: "The latest survey on youth tobacco use shows meaningful progress, with fewer middle and high school students using tobacco products overall. This improvement reflects the contribution of strong federal, state and local policies, along with sustained public health education. But these gains are fragile and in no way guaranteed to continue without our..."

How parents can talk to their kids about vaping as FDA authorizes some flavored e-cigarettes

Ricky Resendez first tried e-cigarettes in eighth grade. By the time he got to high school, he was vaping daily. "It was just kind of normal," said Ricky, a 17-year-old recent graduate in Superior, Wisconsin. "Kids were vaping in class, in the bathrooms, wherever." Nationally, nearly 6% of middle and high school students—amounting to 1.63 million kids—reported using electronic cigarettes in 2024, federal figures show. Although that is down from previous years, e-cigarettes remain the most commonly used tobacco products among teens, and nearly 9 out of 10 of kids choose flavored products. Some doctors are concerned that...

Fentanyl Users Take Daily Doses 60 Times The Lethal Level

People who use illicit fentanyl build up a mind-boggling tolerance to the drug, eventually taking massive doses that would kill others, a new study finds. The findings mean fentanyl could be much more challenging to quit than previously assumed. The average fentanyl user in Los Angeles takes a daily amount that is roughly 60 times that of the 2-milligram dose that could kill someone who's never used opioids, researchers report in the journal *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*. Overall, users consume daily fentanyl doses that are equal to nearly 9,000 milligrams of morphine, researchers found. "We find that people are...

Short-Acting Opioids for Withdrawal May Keep Patients From Leaving Hospital Early

Treating opioid withdrawal with short-acting opioids showed a dose-dependent association with a reduction in early patient-directed discharge in hospitalized adults receiving medications for opioid use disorder (OUD), according to a retrospective cohort study. In the final adjusted model of 669 hospitalizations representing 520 patients, each doubling of the daily dose of short-acting opioids was associated with an 8% reduction in the hazard of early patient-directed discharge (adjusted HR 0.92, 95% CI 0.86-0.99, $P=0.03$), reported Alexander Logan, MD, of the University of California San Francisco, and co-authors in *JAMA*...

FDA Expands OTC Options for Opioid Overdose Reversal

The FDA approved another opioid overdose reversal product for over-the-counter (OTC) use, the agency announced on Tuesday. The 4-mg intranasal naloxone hydrochloride (Rextovy) nasal spray joins other similar nonprescription products indicated for the emergency treatment of an opioid overdose. The first OTC naloxone was approved in 2023. "Immediate access to naloxone nasal sprays is essential when a person is experiencing an overdose, and FDA remains committed to ensuring nonprescription options are widely available," Karen Murry, MD, the director of the agency's Office of Nonprescription Drug Products, said...

Hospital addiction consultation service may improve outcomes at low cost

Helping hospitalized patients begin treatment for opioid use disorder may improve outcomes at a reasonable financial cost, according to a study co-led by investigators at Cedars-Sinai Health Sciences University. The analysis, published in *JAMA Network Open*, suggests the hospital-based addiction consultation service known as START (Substance Use Treatment and Recovery Team) is cost-effective and clinically effective, based on findings from a prior randomized trial. Investigators used a computer-based model to analyze the clinical trial data and evaluate health care costs and patient outcomes over one year. Compared...

New initiatives to prevent opioid misuse in youth groups focus on peer influence to create long-term behavior change

Drug awareness and prevention programs have often relied on shock tactics—graphic stories, fear-based messaging and one-time assemblies meant to scare students into avoiding illicit drugs. But evidence suggests those approaches rarely lead to lasting behavior change. At Texas A&M University, Joy Alonzo, associate professor of pharmaceutical sciences in the Irma Lerma Rangel College of Pharmacy, along with Marcia Ory, regents and distinguished professor in the School of Public Health, are working to redefine what drug and opioid misuse prevention looks like by shifting the focus from fear to an approach that emphasizes...

Time for better opioid detoxification strategies, researchers say

Addiction services must urgently consider the way they offer support for those wanting to come off opioid substitutes through detoxification, according to researchers at Imperial College London. Following a review of relevant studies, they say different strategies are needed to better support individuals diagnosed with opioid dependence but who aspire to live an opioid-free life, if results are to improve. Among their recommendations are specialist training for addiction services staff to manage opioid withdrawal during detoxification, better provision of medication to alleviate withdrawal symptoms, and more control by...

Funding cuts to syringe programs could drive thousands of preventable US deaths

A new study published in JAMA Network Open projects that reductions in federal funding for syringe service programs (SSPs) could lead to substantial increases in mortality among people who inject drugs in the United States. Researchers from the University of Colorado Anschutz examined the potential long-term effects of federal funding cuts to SSPs using a microsimulation model representing people who inject drugs nationwide in a variety of funding-reduction scenarios over a five-year period. SSPs provide evidence-based harm reduction services, including sterile syringe access, naloxone distribution and wound...

Weight-loss drugs like Ozempic could work for addiction too—and we finally know how

For many people, the thought of a tasty burger or a cold pint of beer conjures a vivid mental image and drives behavior. This link between thinking and doing serves a clear function—it motivates us to get the necessities of life. But for some, this process can malfunction. Preoccupation with these rewarding stimuli can lead to disorders of substance overuse, including overeating to the point of obesity and alcohol abuse. Studies going back to the 1970s have linked vivid mental imagery with drug abuse. Understanding this link between craving and consuming is central to understanding addiction. This has eluded...

How do recovery community centers support people in recovery over time?

More than 1 in 10 adults in the United States believe they had a substance use problem at some point, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Among these adults, more than 7 in 10 considered themselves to be in recovery. An increasingly common way people support their recovery is by visiting recovery community centers (RCCs), which have emerged across the country and in Pennsylvania. RCCs provide support for people who are building and trying to maintain recovery. Hobart "Bo" Cleveland, professor of human development and family studies at Penn State, studies the benefits...

Secretary Kennedy Announces Over \$700 Million in New Funding to Address Mental Illness, Addiction, Homelessness

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. today announced the posting of a \$96 million funding opportunity for the Safety Through Recovery, Engagement, and Evidence-based Treatment and Support (STREETs) program, along with \$612 million in funding opportunities for additional behavioral health programs. These announcements, which drive forward President Trump's Great American Recovery Initiative, were made during a press conference following the Secretary's visit to the Easterseals MORC Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC). "Through more than \$700 million...

Why women with HIV are still dying early, even when virus is not main cause

Women with HIV most often die from preventable, trauma-related conditions like substance use and mental illness—not the virus itself. Yet these leading causes are largely missing from official death records, according to new research by UC San Francisco. The study is the first to compare death certificates with the causes of death identified by doctors, nurses, social workers and pharmacists who knew the women well. HIV was listed as a cause of death in 68% of cases, but the health care providers found that HIV played a role in just 15%. The providers, on the other hand, identified the leading causes of death as mental illness...

Inside Trump's Reversal on HIV

In 2019, midway through his marathon and frequently combative State of the Union address, President Donald Trump made a promise that garnered him a rare bipartisan standing ovation. "Together," he pledged from the podium, "we will defeat AIDS in America." The announcement of an ambitious plan to end the HIV epidemic by 2030 caught even his own top health officials by surprise. A few months earlier, the heads of several health agencies had shown Trump new data proving it was possible — for the first time since cases first exploded in the 1980s — to halt the spread of the virus. They had carefully tailored their pitch to...

Trump administration to phase out HIV funding for South Africa

The Trump administration has decided to start phasing out HIV funding for South Africa following the country's "failure to make demonstrable progress on policy

requests by the administration,” a State Department official told POLITICO on Thursday. The official, who agreed to discuss the decision only if POLITICO did not use their name, said the decision to “initiate a phased drawdown of PEPFAR programming in South Africa” is in line with President Donald Trump’s February 2025 executive order accusing South Africa of discriminating against its white Afrikaner minority and directing U.S. agencies to stop...

Health equity researchers fear unseen level of scrutiny under White House proposal

Deep inside a White House proposal to overhaul how the government awards grants is a short section that health disparities researchers say could disqualify much of their work from federal funding — perhaps the most serious threat yet to the future of their field. Since it was issued last month, the 412-page proposal has drawn thousands of public comments, in large part because it would diminish the power of peer review in determining which grants are funded, and place that authority with political appointees. Less attention has been given to how the proposed changes could affect efforts to eliminate health disparities...

Funding Opportunities



[RFA-DA-27-007](#)

Limited Competition: Growing Great Ideas: Research Education Course in Entrepreneurship and Product Development for Researchers Studying Drug Use, Drug Misuse, and Drug Addiction (UE5 Clinical Trial Not Allowed)

New Publications from UCAC Faculty

Overcoming low representation: Lessons from an integrative data analysis of CTN studies for assessing treatment effectiveness among Black people who use cocaine and/or opioids

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

Journal of Substance Use and Addiction Treatment

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ABSTRACT

Given the disproportionate impact of substance use on individuals, families, and communities from populations underrepresented in clinical trials, increasing their enrollment in treatment research is critical for ensuring that the findings inform policies and programs that are inclusive of all communities, thereby advancing health equity. However, since underrepresented groups continue to be underenrolled in clinical trials testing the efficacy and effectiveness of psychosocial treatments for substance use disorder, substance use researchers are still grappling with this challenge. In this commentary, we describe rigorous methodological approaches, such as integrative data analysis (IDA) and related methods (e.g., moderated nonlinear factor analysis and propensity score weighting), that can help address the challenges posed by the underrepresentation of certain populations. By combining individual-level data from multiple studies into a pooled dataset, these methods increase sample size and statistical power while addressing covariate imbalance across treatment groups. We describe how we employed these methods to address the aims of our recently completed secondary data analysis project conducted within the National Drug Abuse Treatment Clinical Trial Network (CTN-0125; Integrative Data Analysis of CTN Studies to Examine the Impact of Psychosocial Treatments for Black People Who Use Cocaine and/or Opioids). Our study used these methods to pool and analyze data from nine completed CTN trials to assess the comparative effectiveness of psychosocial treatments for Black adults who use cocaine and/or opioids, a group underrepresented in registered trials of the NIDA. We illustrate the application of these methodological approaches in CTN-0125 and demonstrate how they complement each other to address unique analytic challenges. We describe how we addressed data harmonization challenges due to variations in data formats and inconsistencies or gaps in the supportive documentation available on the NIDA Data Share website. We conclude with recommendations for the research field on how to further address sample size and data integration challenges.

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