

UC CAR Weekly Newsletter 8.19.2022

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/NIAAAA, and information about any new publications from CAR members. Please email Jen Rowe (roweji@ucmail.uc.edu) to change your communication preferences. **Please note that the weekly newsletter will be on hiatus Friday, September 2, and Friday, September 9.** 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

Opinion: Kentucky Should Spend \$478M In Opioid Settlement Money On Harm Reduction Policies Instead Of Jail.

Dream Corps Justice Campaign Director Amanda Hall and ACLU Policy Strategist Kungu Njuguna write for the [Louisville \(KY\) Courier-Journal](#) (8/11, 554K), "For years, the reaction to drug use has been to incarcerate and reincarcerate. ... We now know that further criminalizing drug use has negative public health effects" and higher overdose death rates. The "Kentucky Senate Bill 90 aims to divert those with substance use disorder to treatment and is a great first step. However, we must do more." Kentucky has "the resources to fund this new future" from the \$478M Kentucky will receive from the National Opioid Settlement. The funds "must be spent on substance use disorder treatment and prevention." In Kentucky, there are a "multitude of grassroots organizations that are providing ground-level services to those suffering in active addiction. Funding these community-based, harm reduction organizations is paramount if Kentucky seeks to stem the tide of fatal overdoses."

Use opioid legal awards for help, drug prevention

Drug settlements reached earlier this summer between Trumbull County and retail pharmacies that distributed highly addictive opioid drugs to local residents is just one step in solving the ongoing drug crisis. After legal fees, Trumbull County will receive \$1,123,984 from the Rite Aid litigation and \$1,125,000 from Giant Eagle as

part of the \$2.2 million settlement reached in June. The money comes from settlements claiming Rite Aid...

Federal jury holds pharmacy chains CVS, Walgreens and Walmart responsible for role in opioid crisis

A federal jury in Cleveland on Tuesday found that three of the nation's largest pharmacy chains, CVS, Walgreens and Walmart, were liable for contributing to the opioid epidemic in two Ohio counties. It marks the first time the retail segment of the drug industry has been held accountable in the decades long opioid epidemic. The case could set a precedent for other U.S. cities and counties looking to take legal action against corporations...

National News

Biotech Awakn Life Sciences Corp To License Ketamine Protocol As Alcohol Addiction Treatment.

[Bloomberg](#) (8/15, Kary, 3.57M) reports, "A new licensing deal for ketamine in the US shows the growing ambitions of the psychedelics industry to treat addiction." Biotech Awakn Life Sciences Corp. "is licensing its ketamine protocol to treat alcohol abuse to Revitalist Lifestyle and Wellness Ltd." Awakn Chief Executive Officer Anthony Tennyson, in "disclosing the deal for the first time to Bloomberg News, said it comes amid growing evidence that ketamine can help reset addictive behaviors." Awakn "uses a copyrighted method of psychotherapy to help patients interpret their experiences during the mind-altering state." Earlier in 2022, "Awakn published results of a mid-stage clinical trial that showed people with severe alcohol use disorder who were treated with its injections abstained from drinking for longer than those who took a placebo."

Editorial Says Illegal Marijuana Sales Likely To Continue For Foreseeable Future.

The [Lowell \(MA\) Sun](#) (8/18, 94K) reports, "Retail marijuana sales in Lowell," Massachusetts "might be considered a cash crop, but that apparently hasn't stopped a flourishing black market, if a recent crackdown on an illegal, large scale Woburn-based distribution network is any indication." The editorial goes into detail as to why the illegal pot market in Massachusetts is able to thrive despite marijuana being legal. It lists off several reasons, such as not having to pay taxes, undercutting legal marijuana prices, and lack of fines or imprisonment as consequences. The editorial concludes, "it appears these parallel marijuana markets – one legal, the other outlawed – will continue to coexist for the foreseeable future."

North Dakota Voters To Decide On Marijuana Legalization This Fall.

[The Hill](#) (8/15, Weixel, 5.69M) reports, "North Dakota voters will decide this fall whether to legalize recreational marijuana, following the official certification of a ballot measure." The measure is, in the event of its authorization, going to allow "adults 21 and older to possess up to one ounce of cannabis and small quantities of

cannabis products, such as concentrates and infused products.” Moreover, the measure is additionally going to set up “a regulatory system for registered cannabis businesses, run by the Department of Health and Human Services or another agency designated by the Legislature.” The Hill adds, “Regulators would have until October 1, 2023 to develop rules related to security, advertising, labeling, packaging and testing standards.”

Zide Door Church Raided For Mushrooms, Marijuana Used In Religion Sues Oakland Police Department.

The [Washington Post](#) (8/17, Mark, 10.52M) reports, “At the Zide Door church of entheogenic plants in Oakland, Calif.,” the members are “free to smoke marijuana...in an effort to connect with a higher power” during sermons. “In August 2020...Oakland police officers raided the building and seized about \$200,000 in cannabis, psilocybin mushrooms and cash, claiming that the establishment operated more like an illegal dispensary than a religious institution. No one was arrested or charged, although the items seized were never returned, according to news reports.” The Zide Door Church is now “suing the city of Oakland and its police department, alleging that the raid violated its constitutional and religious freedoms.” In California, recreational marijuana is legal, and “natural hallucinogenic products, like mushrooms, although they cannot be sold,” are effectively decriminalized.

FDA Rule Requiring Graphic Health Warnings On Cigarette Packages Delayed.

[Bloomberg Law](#) (8/17, Castronuovo, Subscription Publication, 4K) reports, “A long-sought FDA rule requiring cigarette packages to include graphic health warnings is now delayed until October 2023 following a recent court order.” The tobacco manufacturers “first filed a lawsuit in 2020 against the Food and Drug Administration over the regulation, which was initially set to take effect in June 2021.”

Disposable Vape Sales Exceeded \$2B In US In Past Year, Data Indicate.

[Reuters](#) (8/16) reports that disposable e-cigarettes now account for “one-third of U.S. e-cigarette retail sales” and “consumers spent more than \$2 billion on them over the past year.” The findings come “from a dataset produced by IRI,” that “was shared with Reuters by an individual outside IRI.” The article lists Kaival Brands’ Bidi Stick as the second highest selling disposable vape during the period of June 20, 2021 to June 12, 2022 with \$103 million in sales.

[Reuters](#) (8/16, McLymore, Zamora) reports more broadly, including a response to questions from the FDA, which states that it is “deeply committed to addressing the ongoing public health concerns around youth e-cigarette use” and “is constantly monitoring the changing marketplace.”

Experts Urge Government To Eliminate Restrictions Around Methadone Use.

[STAT](#) (8/18, Facher, 262K) reports, “When it comes to fighting opioid addiction, there’s no tool more effective than methadone.” However, “for decades, an archaic web of federal regulations has kept the medication out of reach for countless Americans” as “physicians aren’t allowed to prescribe the drug directly to patients” and “pharmacies aren’t allowed to dispense it.” The “patients who want methadone are often required to show up at a designated facility every day – sometimes at the crack of dawn – just to receive a single dose.” Now, as the US faces “a worsening addiction crisis, experts are urging the government to eliminate many of the restrictions surrounding methadone use. Keeping the current rules in place, they argue, probably costs thousands of lives each year.”

Telehealth Fraud Could Endanger Improved Telehealth Treatments For Opioid Addiction.

[The Verge](#) (8/11, Wetsman, 1.54M) reports, “Pandemic-era rules around telemedicine have been a huge boost to efforts to prevent opioid overdoses in the US. But those rules are also how controversial startup companies like Cerebral were able to prescribe Adderall and Xanax to huge numbers of people – and efforts to stem that flood of prescriptions could sweep away overdose prevention efforts in the process.” Telehealth “led to clear improvements in treatment access for people with opioid addiction or dependence,” but “the policies that led to those improvements aren’t guaranteed to stay in place.” Physicians say the focus for prescription decisions “should be on the quality of the care, not the way the care is delivered,” and on a real treatment relationship between the patient and physician. Some lawmakers agree. Sens. Rob Portman (R-OH) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) “sent a letter to the DEA and the Department of Health and Human Services in April of this year asking them to allow opioid-use disorder treatment through telehealth to continue.” But lawmakers “have expressed worries that broader access to telehealth makes fraud more likely.”

Health Officials Adapting COVID-19 Lessons To Fight Opioid Crisis.

[Kaiser Health News](#) (8/17, Houghton) reports that Park City-County Health Department Director Shannan Piccolo walked into multiple hotels in Livingston, Montana, “with a tote bag full of Narcan and a speech about how easy it is to use the medicine that can reverse opioid overdoses.” This “was the first time the local health department offered door-to-door training and supplies to prevent overdose deaths.” The article adds, “The pandemic laid bare the gaps and disparities in the U.S. public health system.” However, “one positive outcome...is that health workers have started adapting lessons they learned from their covid-19 response to other aspects of their work.”

Free Narcan And Overdose Prevention Training Coming To Knoxville.

[WATE-TV](#) Knoxville, TN (8/16, McAlee, 157K) reports, “The Metro Drug Coalition [in Knoxville] is hosting a free overdose prevention and Naloxone training as a part of

overdose awareness month.” Naloxone “is a nasal spray medication that can be life-saving in the event of an opioid overdose.” It “is an opioid antagonist, working to reverse the overdose by attaching to the opioid receptors of the brain to reverse the effects and block the uptake of opioids according to the National Institute of Drug Abuse.”

Federal Law Enforcement Raids Miami-Area Pharmacy Alleged To Be Largest Opioid “Pill Mill” In Florida.

[Reuters](#) (8/16, Bello, Cardona, Lynch) reports, “Federal law enforcement agents raided a Miami-area pharmacy on Tuesday after investigators uncovered evidence the establishment might be operating the largest opioid pill mill in Florida, according to a source familiar with the investigation.” Both a videographer and a Reuters photographer “witnessed more than a dozen federal agents, including agents from the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Health and Human Services (HHS) inspector general’s office, executing a search warrant at Healthplus Pharmacy in Miramar, Florida.”

The [CBS Evening News](#) (8/16, 6:49 p.m. EST, story 9, 0:20, O'Donnell, 3.64M) reported, “Pill mills have fueled the nation’s opioid crisis.”

Anti-Overdose Meds Giveaway At Trenton Thunder, NJ Baseball Game.

[WKXW-FM](#) Trenton, NJ (8/11, Vogt, 78K) reports, “Instead of a tote bag or bobblehead, the first wave of baseball fans at Saturday’s Trenton Thunder game can take home a free dose of naloxone, the medicine used to revive drug users who have overdosed.” The naloxone “giveaway – in partnership with the state Department of Human Services, City of Angels and Horizon BSNJ – is part of a second annual Addiction Awareness Night at the ballpark.” The announcement “said it would be ‘first come, first served while supplies last.’” The NIH is mentioned.

West Virginia, Rite Aid Reach Possible \$30M Opioid Lawsuit Settlement.

[The Hill](#) (8/11, Choi, 5.69M) reports, “West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrissey (R) announced a settlement with pharmacy chain Rite Aid Thursday over a lawsuit alleging the company had contributed to the oversupply of opioids in the state.” Morrissey “filed the lawsuit against Rite Aid and Walgreens in 2020, alleging they had failed to monitor and report orders for opioid prescriptions.” Morrissey “said the settlement amount could amount to \$30 million from Rite Aid.” The lawsuit “alleged that Rite Aid’s failure to oversee suspicious opioid prescription orders resulted in ‘significant losses through their [patients’] past and ongoing medical treatment costs,’ including the cost of rehabilitation, medical treatments and minors born addicted to opioids.”

Northeast Philadelphia Pharmacy Owner, Employees Agree To Pay Over \$4.1M Settlement To Resolve Opioid Distribution Allegations.

The [Philadelphia Business Journal](#) (8/11, Blumenthal, Subscription Publication, 875K) reports, “A longtime Northeast Philadelphia pharmacy owner has agreed to

pay \$4.1 million in a proposed civil judgment reached with local federal prosecutors to resolve allegations that he engaged in a years-long practice of illegally dispensing opioids and other controlled substances, as well as systematic health care fraud.” U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania Jacqueline C. Romero “said that Mitchell Spivack, owner-pharmacist of Verree Pharmacy (now called Spivack Inc.), and other employees have agreed, subject to court approval, to pay more than \$4.1 million to resolve their civil liability under the Controlled Substances Act, False Claims Act, and forfeiture.” The “proposed judgment would also permanently ban them from ever dispensing controlled substances in the future.” Prosecutors “said this marks the culmination of a multiyear joint investigation by federal and state prosecutors.”

In The U.S., A New Approach To Counting Overdoses.

[Undark](#) (8/17, Magazine) reports that accessing overdose data is tricky because oftentimes “the data isn’t updated in real time, nor does it include non-fatal overdoses.” To remedy that, “researchers across the United States have been setting up new digital platforms with reports from people who use drugs, medical examiners, and others. While these platforms may lack the rigor of official government numbers, the academics say the new data could...could save lives.” To address this problem at the federal level, “one of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, or NIDA’s, research priorities, for instance, is looking for new technologies to aid the process.” NIDA’s Science Policy Chief Emily Einstein “said that her organization is unlikely to use data gathered from any of the digital platforms, and that it would opt for CDC numbers instead. However, she noted that finding robust and fine-grained data is a ‘high-priority issue’ for NIDA, and acknowledged the issues in speed, non-fatal overdoses, and certifier consistency. However, Einstein added, for harm reduction groups, these platforms could be great sources of data.”

SAMHSA Awards \$2M Grant To Huntington To Aid People Suffering From Substance Use Disorder.

The [Huntington \(WV\) Herald-Dispatch](#) (8/15, Horsley, 82K) reports, “A \$2 million grant will aid the City of Huntington in establishing support for those suffering [from] substance use disorder.” The funds were awarded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

[West Virginia Public Broadcasting](#) (8/15, Snyder) also covers the story.

COVID-19 Outbreak In Mecklenburg Jail Pauses Most Substance Abuse Programs.

The [Charlotte \(NC\) Observer](#) (8/18, COX, 443K) reports, “The wait for substance abuse counseling inside the Mecklenburg County jail has grown – and those incarcerated face even more delays due to a recent swell of COVID-19 cases at the detention facility.” Recently, “multiple housing units inside the jail were on COVID quarantine, meaning non-essential workers or visitors could not enter. Since June, there have been 100 cases among jail workers and those in custody.” The outbreak

forced officials “to pause most of the jail’s substance abuse program, contributing to the waitlist growing to 45 days – longer than many people who need the help even spend in custody.”

Animal Tranquilizers Increasingly Found Mixed In Drugs Could Lead To Overdoses, Deaths, Worcester DA Warns.

The [Springfield \(MA\) Republican](#) (8/16, Dunlop, 592K) reports, “Worcester County District Attorney Joseph D. Early, Jr. is raising the alarm that overdoses and deaths could increase in the region due to an animal tranquilizer being mixed in with drugs in the region.” According to Early, “xylazine, an animal sedative, is increasingly being found mixed in with cocaine, heroin and fentanyl.” This sedative “has been linked to overdose deaths in the United States by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, with New England seeing the most, according to Early.”

Massachusetts Data Suggest Animal Tranquilizer Xylazine Is Increasing State Overdose Deaths.

[Kaiser Health News](#) (8/11, Bebinger) reports, “A street-outreach team from Tapestry Health Systems delivered what’s becoming a routine warning” about animal tranquilizer Xylazine, which “is showing up in about half the drug samples that Tapestry Health tests in...western Massachusetts.” Data “from January to mid-June shows that xylazine was in 28% of drug samples tested by the Massachusetts Drug Supply Data Stream, a state-funded network of community drug-checking and advisory groups.” And “the presence of xylazine is triggering warnings in Massachusetts and beyond for many reasons,” including its possible role in the rise of drug overdose deaths, as Narcan is not effective in reversing Xylazine. However, physicians and Tapestry staff emphasize the need to still administer Narcan along with rescue breathing.

Black, Hispanic Americans Face Inequities In Use Of HIV Medicine, New Data Suggest.

The [Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#) (8/15, J. Thomas, Pratt, 1.46M) reports, a medicine “known as pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP,” and “protects people from the HIV virus is used mostly by white people in Georgia, despite most new cases occurring among Black people, according to” new data “compiled by the AIDSvu project, based at Emory University’s Rollins School of Public Health.” The “project found about 57% of PrEP users in Georgia were white in 2020 and nearly 34% were Black. Meanwhile, almost 72% of HIV diagnoses in Georgia were among Black people in 2019, the most recent year for which data was available – compared to 15% of new cases being diagnosed among white people.” Additionally, “a gap was also seen for Hispanic people in Georgia, though smaller: they account for 9.7% of new cases but 6.9% of PrEP users.”

University Of Tennessee Receives \$3.7M Grant From HRSA To Boost Mental Healthcare Access.

[PatientEngagementHIT](#) (8/16, Rodriguez) reports, “The University of Tennessee’s College of Nursing was recently awarded a \$3.7 million grant by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to fund a project which aims to boost mental healthcare access through nurse practitioner-led mobile health units.” There has been “a significant spike in patient demand for mental healthcare services, but not enough providers to meet those needs,” and “experts found that more than one-third of Americans live in areas lacking mental health professionals.” HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra said at the time of the announcement, “The COVID-19 pandemic has caused behavioral health challenges for Americans of all ages and backgrounds.”

Becerra Meets With State, Local Officials To Discuss Behavioral Mental Health In New Mexico.

The [Las Cruces \(NM\) Sun-News](#) (8/17, D'Ammassa, 85K) reports, New Mexico “officials and health providers gave a public briefing to Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra Wednesday morning on the state of behavioral health services in” New Mexico, “how school-based health centers have helped bridge gaps and why ongoing federal support for the initiatives is necessary.” Becerra sat with Senator Ben Ray Luján, (D-NM), “who has been visiting the area this week while Congress is in recess” for the 90-minute briefing. According to data from the 2019 Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey, “New Mexico’s high-school-age youth lead the nation in reporting feelings of sadness or hopelessness, suicide attempts, use of heroin and consuming alcohol before the age of 13...which notably predates the COVID-19 pandemic and the impacts of illness, fatalities and economic and social disruption from the period of emergency closures of public spaces through the present.”

Funding Opportunities



[RFA-HD-23-035](#)

[Maternal Health Research Centers of Excellence \(U54 Clinical Trial Optional\)](#)

[RFA-HD-23-036](#)

[Maternal Health Research Centers of Excellence Data Innovation and Coordinating Hub/Resource Center \(U24 Clinical Trial Not Allowed\)](#)

[RFA-HD-23-037](#)

[Maternal Health Research Centers of Excellence Implementation Science
Hub/Resource Center \(U24 Clinical Trial Optional\)](#)

[NOT-OD-22-166](#)

[Notice of Special Interest \(NOSI\): Research on the Health of Bisexual and
Bisexual+ People](#)

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