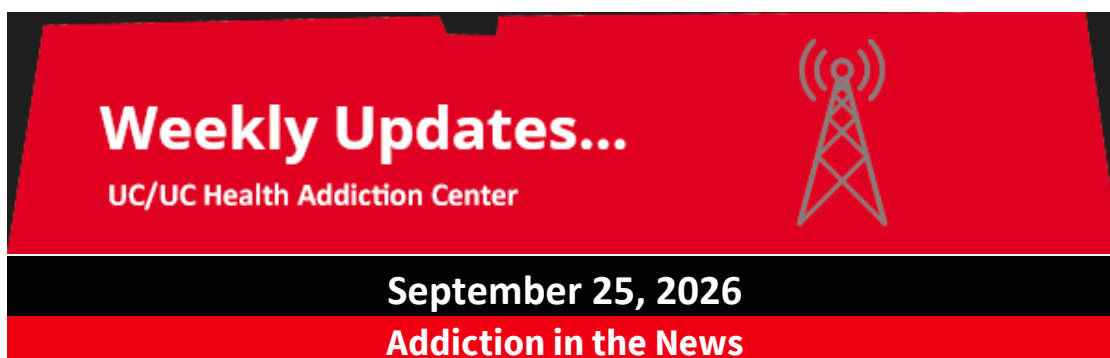


Welcome to the weekly newsletter from the University of Cincinnati/UC Health Addiction Center (UCAC)! Each newsletter includes highlights from addiction in the news topics, active funding opportunities offered by NIDA/NIAAA, and information about any new publications from UCAC researchers. Please email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

More than 100 VIP Smoke Shops to close or be sold after owners plead guilty

CINCINNATI —More than 100 VIP Smoke Shops across Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana must close or be sold by Dec. 1 after two brothers who own the chain pleaded guilty to felony drug trafficking and organized crime charges. Wael Sharaydeh and Ismail Sharida agreed to close or sell the stores as part of a plea agreement. Investigators said the businesses sold illegal substances to minors and carried products with THC levels exceeding state limits. Newtown Police Chief Tom Synan said parents and young people reported that underage customers could easily purchase products at the stores. “It puts all of them on front street, and it’s...

How Ohio researchers are expanding access to addiction treatment

Medications to treat opioid use disorder have proven to be really effective: They can reduce cravings and withdrawal symptoms, decrease the risk of overdose and help slow the spread of infectious diseases. But primary care providers across Ohio are hesitant to prescribe them. “The fact that we even have these [medications] available is a wonderful miracle of science,” said Berkeley Franz, a professor of community-based health at Ohio University. “But what’s really troubling to me as a scientist is that, despite these being really effective, we don’t really implement them.” One study from 2023 suggests only one in five people with opioid...

Commonwealth Gets Federal Boost For Mental Health And Addiction Services

Kentucky is receiving nearly \$17 million in federal funding to strengthen mental health and addiction services across the state. Gov. Andy Beshear announced the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration grants Monday, saying the funding will support 988 crisis services, youth mental health programs, addiction recovery and maternal behavioral health services. The largest award is \$7.39 million to improve Kentucky's response to calls, texts and chats through the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, including services for people at higher risk of suicide and overdose. Other funding includes: + \$2.6 million for early...

National News

U.S. alcohol use falls for first time since the COVID-19 pandemic, but remains above pre-pandemic levels

LOS ANGELES — Alcohol use among U.S. adults has fallen for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic began, though rates remain higher than pre-pandemic levels, according to a new Keck Medicine of USC study published today in *Annals of Internal Medicine*. From 2022 to 2024, any alcohol use declined by nearly 2%, while heavy drinking declined more than 8%. The decline marks the first confirmed reduction in alcohol consumption observed since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. "It's encouraging to see alcohol use decline for the first time since the start of the pandemic," said Brian P. Lee, MD, MAS, a hepatologist and liver...

US FDA expected to unveil steps to accelerate vape, nicotine pouch approvals, WSJ reports

Sept 23 (Reuters) - The US Food and Drug Administration is expected to unveil measures in the coming days that would speed up approvals for vaping products and nicotine pouches, the Wall Street Journal reported on Wednesday, citing people familiar with the matter. The FDA is expected to announce it will revisit a 2021 rule outlining requirements for new tobacco applications, according to the report. The agency could also simplify requirements for scientific studies and speed up review times to add flexibility for more products to get authorized, the report said. Reuters could not immediately verify the report. The FDA did...

Why Vaping Isn't Harmless: Understanding Long-Term Risks

Vaping is often advertised as a safer option than smoking. However, as e-cigarettes have become more common, researchers have learned that they come with serious risks of their own. While scientists are still studying the long-term effects, they know that vaping exposes users to nicotine and other harmful chemicals that can damage the lungs. Nicotine is highly addictive and can negatively affect attention, learning, memory, mood and self-control. These effects are especially concerning for people under age 25 because their brains are still developing. Current research shows that vaping can make young people more likely to...

Scientists Develop a Vaccine That Could Help Turn the Tide on America's Opioid Epidemic

A vaccine that stops an opioid from reaching the brain could one day blunt the high that helps drive repeated use. Virginia Tech researchers are developing that approach for drugs such as oxycodone and fentanyl, and new experiments in mice suggest they are making progress. The team found that a new hybrid lipid-polymer nanoparticle vaccine produced a stronger immune response and improved protection against oxycodone in mice. Researchers also restored the effectiveness of a similar fentanyl-targeting vaccine by pairing it with an immune-boosting substance called an adjuvant. The findings, published in the Journal...

Number of older adults living with opioid use disorder in Ontario more than doubles over eight years, new report finds

The number of Ontarians aged 55 and older with health care interactions related to opioid use disorder (OUD) more than doubled between 2017 and 2025, according to a new report published by the Ontario Drug Policy Research Network (ODPRN), based at St. Michael's Hospital. Key findings include: The number of older adults engaging with the health care system about OUD grew from 7,116 in 2017 to 15,231 in 2025. In contrast, the number of older adults with OUD living in long-term care (LTC) remained low (<130) and stable over the same period. Use of opioid agonist treatment (OAT) more than tripled between 2013 and 2025...

Cellular 'energetic switch' could help separate drug rewards from natural pleasure

Alcohol, opioids, nicotine, cocaine and other addictive substances are known to influence the brain's reward system, the network of brain regions involved in the reinforcement of pleasure-seeking behaviors. Many of these drugs trigger large surges in dopamine, a chemical messenger released in the brain that supports communication between cells, motivation-driven behaviors and learning. Repeated consumption of addictive drugs can result in compulsive behavior, with users struggling to control their intake even when it adversely affects their lives. Repeated drug use can also weaken responses to natural rewards, such...

Collins: White House drops effort to politicize health research grants

The White House has dropped a planned executive order that would put control over medical research grants in the hands of political appointees, according to Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine), a leading critic of the move. Collins urged the White House to drop the matter after it was first reported by POLITICO on Saturday. The administration was planning to create a new board that would control the National Institutes of Health's grantmaking process, with a goal of cutting Harvard's funding. White House Budget Director Russ Vought, a leading critic of NIH grantmaking and Harvard, was to sit on the board and have a veto over grant...

'Frustration brake failure' hypothesis proposes new way to understand addiction

Why does a person continue seeking drugs when doing so becomes increasingly difficult, frustrating or harmful? Researchers at The University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) propose that part of the answer may involve a breakdown in a natural behavioral "brake" that normally signals when it is time to stop pursuing a goal. In a paper published in *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, UTMB researchers introduce the "frustration brake failure" hypothesis, which suggests frustration may play an important role in substance use disorders alongside craving, impulsivity and habit. The concept starts with a familiar experience: When people pursue...

Substance use disorder is linked to an increased risk of suicide, study finds

People with substance use disorder are at a significantly higher risk of both attempting suicide and dying by suicide, according to a study from Karolinska Institutet published in the journal *Molecular Psychiatry*. The study also shows that the risk of suicidal behavior is elevated among relatives of people with substance use disorder, particularly close relatives. In the study, researchers analyzed data from Swedish national registers covering just over 4.2 million people born in Sweden between 1958 and 1999. The participants were followed from 1973 to 2020. The researchers investigated the link between substance use disorders...

Advocates, lawmakers call for release of congressionally approved global health funds

The clock is ticking on more than a billion dollars in congressionally approved funding for global health programs that's being held up by the Trump administration. According to an analysis by Partners in Health, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is withholding \$1.35 billion in bilateral funding that was previously approved by Congress for tuberculosis (TB), malaria, HIV, and maternal and child health programs. The funding is set to expire on September 30, the end of the federal government's fiscal year. The group says the continued withholding of the money could have a devastating impact in countries that rely...

Fiji declares an HIV emergency and expands testing as cases surge

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — Fiji has declared an HIV national emergency after data showed 1 in 60 people in the South Pacific island nation was estimated to be infected. The government says it is boosting testing and treatment efforts to fight a surge in new infections, which have increased 12-fold over the last 15 years, according to the Joint United Nations Program on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS). However, agencies now had to work together on the crisis, officials said this week. The latest figures showed about 9,000 people were living with HIV in 2025 in a country which has fewer than a million people, according to the U.N....

HHS Accelerates Shift to Human-Based Research, Reduces Reliance on Animal Testing

WASHINGTON, D.C. — SEPTEMBER 21, 2026 — The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) today announced a new wave of agency-wide actions to accelerate the shift toward human-based research methods and reduce unnecessary animal testing, advancing a coordinated effort to modernize how the federal government conducts, funds, and evaluates biomedical research. Since Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. took office, HHS agencies have launched more than 20 initiatives to expand the use of technologies including human organoids, tissue models, artificial intelligence, and computational modeling while...

Funding Opportunities



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

New Publications from UCAC Faculty

Extended-release injection vs sublingual buprenorphine for illicit opioid use in pregnant patients with depression and/or anxiety

Gerald Cochran, Marcela Smid, Daniel Lewis, Michelle Lofwall, Elizabeth E. Krans, Jennifer P. Wisdom, Davida M. Schiff, Jessica R. Gray, Constance Guille, Mitra Lewis, Viviana E. Horigian, Peter R. Martin, Frankie Kropp, T. John Winhusen

Drug and Alcohol Dependence

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2026.113358>

ABSTRACT

Background: Active depression and/or anxiety (D/A) symptoms among pregnant individuals with opioid use disorder (OUD) may impact the efficacy of new OUD medication treatment formulations.

Methods: We conducted an exploratory secondary analysis of an intent-to-treat, parallel group, randomized trial that compared the effectiveness of injectable extended-release buprenorphine (XR-BUP) to sublingual (SL-BUP). Participants included pregnant adults (N = 140) seeking or receiving buprenorphine for OUD treatment. A total of 52.1% (n = 73) of

participants screened positive for active D/A symptoms at baseline, assessed using the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale. The primary outcome of illicit opioid abstinence, measured by urine drug screens, was assessed from baseline through one-year postpartum. We also assessed buprenorphine adherence, opioid craving, and withdrawal during the same period. We employed descriptive statistics to characterize baseline population characteristics and longitudinal multiple regression to test treatment effects across time.

Results: Opioid abstinence during pregnancy was higher in the XR-BUP group than the SL-BUP group who were D/A positive (group difference=12.5%, $p = 0.03$) compared to D/A negative (group difference=6.7%, $p = 0.27$). Withdrawal was lower during the postpartum period in the XR-BUP group than the SL-BUP group for those D/A positive (group difference -2.9 , $p < 0.01$) compared to those D/A negative (group difference= -0.7 , $p = 0.47$). We observed a time effect for decreases in the proportion of participants who were D/A positive during pregnancy (Odds Ratio=0.27, $p < 0.01$).

Conclusion: Among pregnant individuals with OUD and co-occurring D/A symptoms, XR-BUP may confer greater benefits related to opioid abstinence and reduced withdrawal symptoms compared to SL-BUP.

Keywords: Pregnancy; Opioid use disorder; Depression/anxiety; And injectable extended-release buprenorphine.

© [2026 UC/UC Health Addiction Center]

University of
CINCINNATI | UC Health

**ADDICTION
CENTER**

