

UC CAR Weekly Newsletter 10.29.2021

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/NIAAA, and information about any new publications from CAR members. Please email Jen Rowe (roweji@ucmail.uc.edu) to change your communication preferences. 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

From sheriff to inmate: Ohio man shares story of failure to help others struggling with addiction

SANDUSKY COUNTY, Ohio — "I knew deep down that I was an addict, but because of who I was. I didn't want to reveal that. So I kept holding everything in. Denial, denial and shame and shame," said Kyle Overmyer. An open and honest confession from a man, who once lived a life full of deception. Sworn to uphold the law, Kyle Overmyer knowingly broke it. Falling from sheriff to inmate. "I was diagnosed with arthritis, with a multitude of problems. I used the opioids..."

Ohio Wellness Briefing Addresses Opioid Epidemic

The Healthy State Alliance is an initiative involving members of The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center and Bonsecourt Mercy Health. Columbus, Ohio — A committee of experts is addressing the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the opioid epidemic in Ohio during a wellness briefing at Ohio State University on Wednesday. The Healthy State Alliance is an initiative involving members of The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center and members...

National News

Demand For Liver Transplants Among Heavy Drinking Americans Surged During Pandemic, Study Suggests.

[USA Today](#) (10/27, Gleeson, 12.7M) reports in continuing coverage that the number of Americans “seeking liver transplants skyrocketed during the coronavirus pandemic, shooting up 50% higher than predicted before COVID-19 affected the country.” A study by University of Michigan researchers “revealed a positive correlation between the increase in the number of people on a waiting list for a liver and the increase in retail sales of alcohol during the pandemic timeframe.” The findings were published in JAMA Network.

[HealthDay](#) (10/27, Preidt, 11K) reports that the study “found that the number of people with alcoholic hepatitis who received a new liver (32,320) or were put on a liver transplant waiting list (51,488) between March 2020 and January 2021 was 50% higher than what was expected based on pre-pandemic patterns, CNN reported.”

Commentary Discusses Warning Signs Of Addiction For Lawyers.

In an opinion piece for [Bloomberg Law](#) (10/26, Subscription Publication, 4K), Grant Law PLLC attorney Jeff Grant, “who is in recovery from addiction to alcohol and opiates, relates five warning signs of addiction for other lawyers.” The attorney, “who was disbarred but recently regained his license, discusses what to look for in oneself or in others.” The warning signs include “imperceptible changes,” putting tasks off until the next day, and “leading a double life.”

Top Federal Drug Agency Tells Congress About Marijuana Research Barriers Caused By Restrictive Scheduling.

[Marijuana Moment](#) (10/25, Jaeger) reports, “The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) told Congress in a report obtained by Marijuana Moment that the Schedule I status of controlled substances like cannabis is preventing or discouraging research into their potential risks and benefits.” The report, which was submitted to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, “also said that current restrictions that block scientists from studying the actual cannabinoid products that consumers can purchase at dispensaries is impeding research to an extent that constitutes a public health concern.” NIDA Director Dr. Nora Volkow recently told Marijuana Moment that she thinks “it would be theoretically ideal to understand the actual products that people are consuming, as opposed to trying to understand it with a different compound – a different plant that will vary in terms of the contents of ingredients.”

Marijuana Vaping By School-Aged Youth Doubled Between 2013 And 2020, Study Suggests.

[CNN](#) (10/25, LaMotte, 89.21M) reports that new research indicates that “[marijuana] vaping by school-aged youth doubled between 2013 and 2020...with reported use within the last 30 days rising seven-fold during the same time period.” Researchers

“analyzed 17 studies conducted throughout Canada and the United States that involved nearly 200,000 adolescents” and “found that teens in their senior year of high school were most likely to be vaping marijuana compared to younger adolescents. In 2018, for example, one in three grade-12 students reported vaping weed.” The findings were published Monday in JAMA Pediatrics. [Article attached.]

Despite Lack Of Evidence, Many Turning To Marijuana To Treat Depression, Anxiety.

According to the [Wall Street Journal](#) (10/26, Petersen, Subscription Publication, 8.41M), people are now turning to marijuana to treat depression and anxiety despite the lack of scientific evidence. Consumption has increased in the last decade, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration released data Monday showing a 4.8% increase since 2010 in use in people ages 12 and above.

The Dangers Of ‘Spice’ And Other Synthetic Cannabinoids.

[Discover Magazine](#) (10/28, Walters, 6.12M) reports, “Synthetic cannabinoids, commonly known as ‘spice’ and ‘K2,’ are substances that mimic the psychoactive chemical compounds present in cannabis.” However, “these lab-made substances barrage users with severe symptoms and are harder to quit.” National Institute on Drug Abuse Health Scientist Administrator Ruben Baler said, “There are these unscrupulous chemists out there in the world working in unsanctioned, illegal labs, who have used their creativity and ingenuity to come up with new molecules every morning. ... There is an infinite array of possibilities for these chemists to come up with.”

New York AG Warns Parents To Watch Out For THC-Laced Products.

[USA Today](#) (10/27, Gilbert, 12.7M) reports the New York Attorney General “wants parents to be on high alert about cannabis products that could be mistaken for regular candy and snacks.” In a press release “issued Tuesday, Attorney General Letitia James noted the products are not only illegal in New York, but pose a great danger to unsuspecting children.” The press release “included pictures of THC products that are packaged to look like ordinary Sour Patch Kids, Oreos, Cheeto Puffs and Doritos.”

US FTC Report Shows “Slight” Rise In Cigarette Sales In 2020.

[CNN](#) (10/27, Morrow, 89.21M) says there was a “slight 0.4% increase” in the number of cigarettes sold to wholesalers and retailers in the US in 2020, according to a new report from the Federal Trade Commission. The “report didn’t detail why sales inched higher, but the rise tracks with similar shifts in consumer behavior ushered in by the pandemic... Experts say increased isolation, stress and uncertainty created a perfect storm for substance use disorders.”

UK Kids Getting Hooked On Country-Banned Non-Smoking Tobacco Product.

The [Daily Mirror \(UK\)](#) (10/23, Sharpe, 439K) reported, “Schoolkids are getting hooked on a non-smoking tobacco that is banned from sale in the UK.” Snus, “pronounced ‘snoose’ – is made from ground-up leaves packed into a pouch, which is placed under the top lip.” Football managers “have warned its use is on the rise among professional players, who use it as a stimulant.” A Sunday People probe “found scores of youngsters raving about it on TikTok.”

Johns Hopkins Medicine Receives First Federal Grant For Psychedelic Research In Over Half A Century.

[Baltimore Fishbowl](#) (10/21, Stewart) reports in continuing coverage that the National Institute on Drug Abuse has awarded John Hopkins Medicine nearly \$4 million for a three-year study on “the potential impacts of psilocybin on tobacco addiction.” The grant “is the first NIH grant awarded for the direct investigation of a classic psychedelic in over 50 years.”

Good News, Bad News For Buprenorphine In Opioid Use Disorder.

[Medscape](#) (10/21, Whitlock Burton, Subscription Publication, 219K) reports that new research indicates that buprenorphine misuse in the US “by patients with opioid use disorder (OUD) dropped sharply between 2015 and 2019.” Investigators led by the National Institute on Drug Abuse’s Beth Han, MD, analyzed “data from the National Surveys on Drug Use and Health” and found “that about 50% of the patients with OUD were not receiving substance use treatment – and that some may be misusing buprenorphine in an effort to self-treat their addiction.” The findings (10/1) were published online October 15 in JAMA Network Open. The study was funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse. NIDA Deputy Director Wilson Compton, a co-investigator, told Medscape, “Many other prescription opioids are misused at much higher rates. ... While there are concerns about all of them, we want to make sure that people don’t exaggerate the concerns – and understanding that oxycodone and hydrocodone are so much more frequently misused is important.” [\[Article attached.\]](#)

HHS Pledges More Effort, Resources Toward Harm Reduction For Drug Users.

The [Washington Post](#) (10/27, Bernstein, 10.52M) reports HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra “outlined the Biden administration’s strategy for curbing drug overdoses Wednesday, committing more federal support for harm reduction techniques such as distribution of clean syringes and test strips used to check street drugs for hidden fentanyl.” This “four-part strategy also includes measures to prevent drug addiction, in part by continuing to reduce the inappropriate prescribing of opioids; expand medication-based treatment, which research has shown to be the most effective approach; and improve support for people recovering from substance use disorder.” Given that the estimated number of overdose deaths is approaching

“100,000 per year,” Becerra said in an interview...that ‘we’re changing the way we do this. ... We know what works. We’ve had years of evidence now.”

Additional Sources. [Bloomberg Law](#) (10/27, Lopez, Subscription Publication, 4K) quotes Becerra as saying, “We’re changing the way we address overdoses. Our new strategy focuses on people – putting the very individuals who have struggled with addiction in positions of power.”

[WBAL-TV Baltimore](#) (10/27, 219K) reports Becerra made the announcement during a visit to Baltimore. He said, “For decades, our government tried to stigmatize and punish those with addiction. Stigma doesn’t save lives. Stigma induces silence, secrecy, fear. That’s why, today, we’re rolling out a strategy that’s different, that changes course and that gives people the help they need.” Becerra’s department “is working to increase naloxone availability across the country, and states and local governments will receive \$30 million in harm-reduction grants.”

Opioid Crisis Magnifies Importance Of Getting Old Drugs Out Of Medicine Cabinets.

[WTOP-FM Washington](#) (10/21, King, 164K) reports, “Saturday is National Prescription Drug Take Back Day, and this year it’s happening during a surge in opioid deaths.” The article says, “Disposing of old prescription drugs is all the more important because they have been linked to the use of heroin.” The National Institute on Drug Abuse reported that “a study of young, urban injection drug users interviewed in 2008 and 2009 found that 86 percent had used opioid pain relievers nonmedically prior to using heroin, and their initiation into nonmedical use was characterized by three main sources of opioids: family, friends, or personal prescriptions.”

Canadian Groups Draw Attention To Safe Supply Method In Effort To Prevent Overdose Deaths.

[TIME](#) (10/25, Moakley, 18.1M) reports the [Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users](#) and the [Drug User Liberation Front](#), which are both based in Canada, are “drawing attention to their effort” to follow a safe supply method when attempting to curb overdose deaths. The method involves handing out illegal drugs that have been tested to ensure that they are not laced with fentanyl.

California Lawmakers Propose Allowing Supervised Injection Sites Amid Rising Overdose Deaths.

The [Los Angeles Times](#) (10/23, Reyes, 3.37M) reported that federal data shows deaths “from drug overdoses have surged during the pandemic, claiming more than 90,000 lives last year across the country.” According to the article, “As the numbers have soared, many experts, advocates and lawmakers have promoted an idea still fresh to the United States: giving people a safe place to inject drugs under supervision.” In fact, California state lawmakers “are pushing to allow San Francisco, Oakland and the city and county of Los Angeles to approve entities to run

such programs. The latest California bill, SB 57, envisions them as ‘a hygienic space supervised by trained staff’ where people can use ‘preobtained drugs,’ get sterile supplies and connect to treatment for substance use disorder.”

Opinion: New Index Offers Important Insight Into Addiction Stigma.

In an opinion for [STAT](#) (10/27, 262K), Matthew Stefanko, the vice president of Shatterproof’s National Stigma Initiative, Brea Perry, a professor of sociology and the associate vice provost for social science research at Indiana University, and Anne Krendl, an associate professor in the department of psychological and brain sciences at Indiana University, write that addiction “stigma can’t be eradicated without reliably measuring and monitoring it,” but “there have been few mechanisms for regularly assessing levels of stigma or progress in combating it.” They explain that Shatterproof, Indiana University, “market research firm Ipsos, and The Hartford, an insurance company, developed the Shatterproof Addiction Stigma Index to establish a baseline measure of public attitudes and beliefs about substance-use disorders, and to monitor stigma related to them over time.” They add, “The results of the inaugural Shatterproof Addiction Stigma Index are distressing, but they are also incredibly important.”

VA Faces Interoperability, Digital Transformation Challenges During Pandemic.

[Healthcare IT News](#) (10/26, Jercich, 2K) reports that one of the biggest challenges for the Veterans Health Administration, and healthcare, is interoperability. The lack of interpersonal communication during the “pandemic required rapid delivery of tools, such as those used for information sharing, symptom screening, vaccinations, clinical trials and clinical care, with robust connections between data systems.” Another challenge has been “a massive acceleration of digital transformation, including a thousand-fold surge in telehealth visits from veterans from March through June 2020.” The FDA is mentioned in this story.

Patent For Formulation Of Psilocybin Highlights “Intense” Battle Around Intellectual Property In Psychedelics Sector.

[STAT](#) (10/26, Goldhill, 262K) reports “one of the leading companies racing to develop psychedelics as legal medicines was granted a patent last week for a formulation of psilocybin – the hallucinogenic compound found in magic mushrooms – a decision that highlights the increasingly intense battle around intellectual property for potential medicines in this” sector. This marks “Compass Pathways’ fourth U.S. patent, but its first for a form of psilocybin the company isn’t using in its clinical trials on treatment-resistant depression.” The patent “covers a form of synthetic psilocybin known as ‘Form A hydrate’ and methods of producing it.” The FDA “has granted breakthrough therapy designation to psilocybin and MDMA...for treatment of depression and PTSD, respectively, a sign that the agency is open to approval if the drugs are shown to be effective and safe in trials.”

Emergency Call Centers May Lack Resources To Handle Behavioral Health Crises, Survey Data Reveal.

According to [USA Today](#) (10/26, Miller, 12.7M), cities across the US “have been testing programs in recent years to send mental health professionals instead of police to some emergency calls.” Now, “a survey of 911 call centers suggests the people answering the phone may not have the resources to handle those crises.” On Oct. 26, the Pew Charitable Trusts published a survey of “more than three dozen emergency call centers,” finding that “few have staff trained to handle behavioral health crises.” In fact, “most centers also did not have access to mental health professionals who can help with the calls or first responders in the field trained to handle such crises.”

Psychiatric Facilities’ Staffing Shortage Leaves Patients In Limbo.

[Kaiser Health News](#) (10/26, Miller) reports, “Many patients dealing with mental health crises are having to wait several days in an ER until a bed becomes available at one of Georgia’s five state psychiatric hospitals, as public facilities nationwide feel the pinch of the pandemic.” This shortage “reflects a national trend linked to staffing deficits that are cramping services in the public mental health system” that has worsened during the pandemic, “creating backlogs of poor or uninsured patients as well as people in jails who are awaiting placement in state facilities.”

Hospitals To Improve Patient Data Utilization By Sidestepping Health Record Companies.

[STAT](#) (10/25, Ross, 262K) reports many US hospitals are no longer willing to use EHR software companies to manage their patient data due to restrictions on apps and data sharing. According to STAT, “Spurred by increasingly valuable digital health products and imperatives for data sharing laid bare by the coronavirus pandemic, health systems are forming their own companies that directly compete with products and services provided by the same major electronic health record vendors they’ve been locked in deals with for years, such as Epic Systems and Cerner Corp.”

Increase In Drug Overdose Deaths Reportedly Putting Strain On First Responders.

[The Hill](#) (10/25, Sullivan, 5.69M) reports, “An increase in drug overdose deaths is putting a strain on first responders, prompting the development of new strategies to better help people with addiction and training mechanisms to teach paramedics, police and firefighters how to cope with what they experience on the job once they are off the clock.” CDC data released in October “found a record high of almost 97,000 drug overdose deaths in the 12 months ending in March, a 29.6 percent increase.”

Physicians At Hennepin Healthcare Did Not Comply With Safety Laws In Drug Research, FDA Says.

The [Minneapolis Star Tribune](#) (10/21, Mannix, 855K) reports “Hennepin Healthcare doctors failed to comply with federal safety laws in experimental drug research on members of the public comparing ketamine and other powerful sedatives, the FDA informed the hospital in two warning letters.” An investigator from the FDA “who visited the hospital in 2019 discovered ‘objectionable conditions’ on studies led by Dr. Jon Cole and Dr. Lauren Klein, both of whom ignored FDA regulations and used practices that subjected patients to ‘significantly increased risk,’ according to the letters.” Patti Zettler, former associate chief counsel for the FDA, said, “It’s quite clear that the agency’s view is that there were significant violations here.” The letters were “signed by Sherry G. Bous, director of the FDA’s enforcement division.”

Dr. Haqqani: Research Shows Promise For New Lower Back Pain Relief.

The [Midland \(MI\) Daily News](#) (10/25, 26K) reports, “New research conducted by Stanford University Medicine and supported by the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) and the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)...revealed that a method called empowered relief shows promise for chronic lower back pain relief.” According to the article, “The new method shows faster results than another pain management program already in use called cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT).”

Funding Opportunities



No funding opportunities to post this week.

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