

UC CAR Weekly Newsletter 6.4.2021

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

Center for Addiction Research upcoming Summer Speaker Series Event

The Center for Addiction Research will hold its second Summer Speaker Series event, Wednesday, June 9 at 8am on "Recreational Opioid Use and Viral Infections" featuring CAR member, Dr. Blackard. The series is hosted by the Urban Health Pathway of Next Lives Here. Monthly presentations run through August. **Featured CAR presenters in future sessions will be Drs. Lyons and Merhar. (pdf invite attached)**

>> Register for any of the presentations

Kentucky AG sues CVS Health over state's opioid problems

FRANKFORT, Ky. -- Kentucky's attorney general on Wednesday sued CVS Health, accusing its pharmacy chain of flooding the state with prescription opioids that contributed to the state's addiction woes. Attorney General Daniel Cameron filed the lawsuit in Franklin County Circuit Court in Kentucky's capital city. Cameron says the health care company played a role in "fueling the crisis" by inundating the state with millions of doses of powerful prescription...

National News

Arizona Dispensary Gives Free Marijuana Joints, Edibles To Those Who Receive COVID-19 Vaccine Onsite.

The [Arizona Republic](#) (6/2, Venkataramanan, 1.05M) reports [Mint Cannabis Dispensary](#) “is partnering with Commerce Medical Group this week to offer free, onsite COVID-19 vaccinations at its three Phoenix-area locations.” Mint created an initiative called “Snax for Vaxx.” The dispensary will give anyone aged 21 and older who receives their vaccine onsite “a free pre-rolled joint and an edible cannabis gummy.”

Younger First-Time Users More Likely To Experience Addiction.

The [Spokane \(WA\) Spokesman-Review](#) (6/1, Tanner, 187K) reports [new research](#) indicates “a higher prevalence of substance use disorder (SUD) within 12 months of first using cannabis among adolescents than among young adults.” According to the article, “Researchers examined the prevalence of specific SUDs since first drug use (including tobacco, alcohol, cannabis, cocaine, methamphetamine and heroin) or prescription misuse (including opioids, stimulants and tranquilizers) in adolescents aged 12 to 17 years and young adults aged 18 to 25 years.” The [findings](#) were published in *JAMA Pediatrics*. During an interview with Bloomberg, National Institute on Drug Abuse [Director Nora Volkow](#) said, “One in 10 teens having a marijuana addiction – that’s huge.”

1.1 Billion People Smoked In 2019 – A Record High, Study Says. But Smoking Decreased In The US.

[USA Today](#) (5/28, Gilbert, Miranda, 12.7M) reported, “Although [smoking has decreased](#) in the United States since the 1990s, new research shows there was a global record high of 1.1 billion people who smoked in 2019.” The article added, “The number of smokers was directly tied to population growth, according to the peer-reviewed [study](#).” The piece mentioned National Cancer Institute Director Ned Sharpless and Acting Commissioner of the FDA Dr. Janet Woodcock.

Additional Sources. [Fox News](#) (5/28, Rivas, 23.99M) reported, “Researchers found that [10 countries](#) alone account for almost two-thirds of global smokers: ‘China, India, Indonesia, the USA, Russia, Bangladesh, Japan, Turkey, Vietnam, and the Philippines.’” Additionally, “30% of all smokers worldwide lived in China in 2019, according to the study.”

Drug Overdose Deaths Up 30% In Pandemic Year, Government Data Show.

[MedPage Today](#) (6/1, Frieden, 183K) reports, “[Mortality from all types of drug overdoses](#) increased by a whopping 30% over a 1-year period, [Nora Volkow, MD](#), director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), reported at the FDA Science Forum.” National Center for Health Statistics data show “that [mortality from overdoses from all types of drugs](#) increased 30%, from 70,669 deaths in October

2019 to 91,862 deaths in October 2020, 'and I think that that is a number that is very, very chilling,' Volkow said." Volkow added, "SAMHSA [the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration] and the DEA [Drug Enforcement Administration] changed policies on two of the medications that are most widely utilized for treating people with an opioid use disorder...to prevent them from overdosing and also to help them achieve recovery."

Mobile Addiction-Recovery Company Expands Services.

The [Boston Business Journal](#) (5/28, Perez, Subscription Publication, 881K) reported DynamiCare, "a local mobile health company" founded "with a mission to target the opioid crisis in the" US, "has expanded its technology to battle against alcohol and tobacco addiction." DynamiCare "has released data showing that its recovery platform can increase quit rates two-three times more than average recovery systems for drugs, alcohol and tobacco." Three "studies by academic researchers at John Hopkins University, Western Michigan University and The University of Vermont were published by peer-reviewed journals showing the company's success with recovering addicts, company officials said." Because of the studies' results, NIH "has awarded DynamiCare a \$1.6M grant for an expanded trial with 300 participants, which was recently launched in Vermont."

Hip-Hop Community Has Intertwined Presence In Opioid Epidemic.

[Kaiser Health News](#) (5/28, Giles) reported "drug use in the hip-hop community has an ever increasing presence that is intertwined with the music." The lyrics, for example, "suggest that opioid misuse is part and parcel with fame and wealth, just a normal, and innocuous, component of that life." The article chronicled the lives of several hip-hop artists who have struggled with opioid addiction. Researchers at the CDC "say fatal drug overdoses nationwide have surged roughly 20% during the covid pandemic, killing more than 83,000 people in 2020." The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's analysis found social inequities. The article adds, "According to a 2020 report from the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Behavioral Health Equity and SAMHSA, attention to this crisis has focused more on white suburban and rural communities, even though Black communities are experiencing similar dramatic increases in opioid misuse and death."

West Virginia Sheriff Warns Of Long-Term Impacts Of Opioid Crisis.

The [AP](#) (5/27) reports Cabell County, West Virginia Sheriff Chuck Zerkle "testified Thursday during a landmark trial against three large opioid distributors that he is worried the scourge of the pain pill epidemic will remain a very real part of life." He said, "I fear for what comes for my grandchildren and the next generation. This is not about me. I'm an old guy. I'm done. What comes down the road, that's what I worry about." The lawsuit, which was "filed by Cabell County" and the city of

Huntington, “accuses drug distributors AmerisourceBergen Drug Co., Cardinal Health Inc. and McKesson Corp. of fueling the U.S. crisis.”

Louisiana Lawmakers Approve Expansion Of Specialized Drug Courts.

The AP (5/31) reports “Louisiana will seek to expand its specialized drug courts using the proceeds from opioid-related lawsuits, under a measure that received final passage from lawmakers.” The bill “won unanimous support in the House and the Senate to head to the governor’s desk.” The bill “creates a drug and specialty court fund in the state treasury to deposit money recovered from litigation against or settlements involving the opioid industry.” The money “will be used to expand drug courts across Louisiana, in which judges give some people arrested for crimes the option of substance abuse treatment and heavy supervision as an alternative to jail time.”

Collins: NIH Contemplating Next-Gen Clinical Trials For Psychedelics.

Inside Health Policy (6/2, Wang, Subscription Publication) reports behind a paywall that NIH “is contemplating how to move forward with psychedelics research for mental health disorders like depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.” The agency “is considering hosting a workshop on the topic, NIH Director Francis Collins told Senate appropriators last week.” During the May 26 appropriations hearing, Collins “said there’s been a resurgence of interest in psychedelic drug research, including on psilocybin and 3,4-methylenedioxy-methamphetamine (MDMA). Psilocybin has now been tried in no less than three randomized control trials.”

FDA Approves Olanzapine And Samidorphan As Monotherapy For Adults With Schizophrenia And Bipolar I Disorder, Company Announces.

Reuters (6/1) reports Alkermes Plc announced “on Tuesday the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had approved its treatment...for schizophrenia and bipolar I disorder.” According to the article, “Lybalvi is a once-daily, oral antipsychotic drug composed of olanzapine, an established antipsychotic agent, and samidorphan, a new chemical entity, the company said.”

MedPage Today (6/1, Monaco, 183K) reports, “The announcement by Alkermes stated that it expects the new antipsychotic to be available in the U.S. in the fourth quarter of 2021.”

Smartphone App “Woebot” Aims To Provide Mental Health Advice.

The New York Times (6/1, Brown, 20.6M) reports on “Woebot, a therapeutic chatbot” app that “presents itself as an automated therapist when finding a real one can feel like a logistical and financial impossibility.” The app “aims to use natural language processing and learned responses to mimic conversation, remember past sessions and deliver advice around sleep, worry and stress.” According to the Times, “Woebot Health says the pandemic has driven up demand

for its services.” The Times adds that “the current, free version of Woebot is not subject to strict oversight from the Food and Drug Administration because it falls under the category of ‘general wellness’ product, which receives only F.D.A. guidance.”

Machine Learning Faces Credibility Crisis.

STAT (6/2, Ross, 262K) reports, “Machine learning, a subset of AI driving billions of dollars of investment in the field of medicine, is facing a credibility crisis.” Failure to test AI models on different sources of data – “a process known as external validation – is common in studies published on preprint servers and in leading medical journals. It often results in an algorithm that looks highly accurate in a study, but fails to perform at the same level when exposed to the variables of the real world, such as different types of patients or imaging scans obtained with different devices.” A recent investigation by STAT “found that only 73 of 161 AI products approved by the federal Food and Drug Administration publicly disclosed the amount of data used to validate the product, and just seven reported the racial makeup for their study populations.”

Proliferation Of Vaccine Lotteries Triggers Fears Of Relapse For Gambling Addicts.

The [Washington Post](#) (5/26, Chason, 10.52M) reports on some states’ decision to institute vaccine lotteries to encourage Americans to get vaccinated, and the risks associated with such lotteries for Americans with gambling addictions. According to the Post, “For many problem gamblers, it is not just about the money, but the psychological impact of placing a bet, said Keith Whyte, executive director of the National Council on Problem Gambling. Being entered unwillingly into a vaccine lottery could activate the same parts of the brain that light up when people are gambling....” Some states with vaccine lotteries are allowing vaccinated adults to opt out of the pool, such as Maryland; others, like Ohio, are “requiring vaccinated residents to opt in to be eligible for prizes. That decision was partly because of concern about problem gamblers, said DeWine spokesman Dan Tierney, and partly because officials thought it would be easier to confirm vaccination statuses and contact winners if residents who wanted to participate filled out waivers.”

Funding Opportunities



GRANTS & FUNDING

NIH Central Resource for Grants and Funding Information

[RFA-AA-21-010](#)

[Collaborative Initiative on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders \(CIFASD\), Research Project \(U01 Clinical Trial optional\)](#)

[RFA-AA-21-011](#)

[Collaborative Initiative on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders \(CIFASD\), Administrative Resource \(U24\) \(Clinical Trial Not Allowed\)](#)

[RFA-AA-21-012](#)

[Collaborative Initiative on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders \(CIFASD\), Diagnostic-Telemedicine Resource \(U24 Clinical Trial Not Allowed\)](#)

[RFA-AA-21-013](#)

[Collaborative Initiative on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders \(CIFASD\), Data Coordination Resource \(U24 Clinical Trial Not Allowed\)](#)

[RFA-AA-21-014](#)

[Collaborative Initiative on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders \(CIFASD\), Developmental Project \(UH2 Clinical Trial Optional\)](#)

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