

UC CAR Weekly Newsletter 4.2.2021

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

We can't wait for the pandemic to end to fight the opioid overdose surge

[Opinion By Sen. Rob Portman, Posted April 1, 2021](#)

Drug-related overdoses, especially those attributed to opioids, are surging during the coronavirus pandemic. With over 500,000 deaths attributed to COVID-19, policymakers are rightly focused on vaccines, therapies, testing and other public health measures. But we can't ignore the growing drug epidemic...

National News

CDC Adds Substance Use Disorders To List Of Conditions That Raise COVID-19 Risks.

[McClatchy](#) (3/29, Camero, 29K) reports that the CDC has "added substance use disorders, such as alcohol, opioid or cocaine use, to its list of medical conditions that put individuals at greater risk of developing severe COVID-19, citing the serious effects many drugs can have on people's health." The agency says that although risks "for severe COVID-19 are high for people with substance use disorders...it's up to states to determine when certain people are eligible for vaccines, which will help protect them against infection, hospitalization and death."

Teenage Brains May Be Especially Vulnerable To Marijuana And Other Drugs.

The [New York Times](#) (3/29, O'Connor, 20.6M) reports adolescents 12 to 17 years of age are more likely than individuals 18 to 25 years of age to become dependent on a variety of substances, according to a new study led by a team of scientists at the National Institute on Drug Abuse. The researchers looked at nine substances and drugs, but found that for alcohol and tobacco “there was not much of a difference between the two age groups: Both older and younger youth had a similar rate of developing a substance use disorder.”

Additional Sources. [Bloomberg](#) (3/29, Kary, 3.57M) reports, “Teenagers’ addiction rates for cannabis are about the same as for prescription opioids,” researchers concluded in a study “based on data from 2015 to 2018 collected by national surveys done by an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.” The study revealed that one “year after first trying cannabis, almost 10.7% of adolescents age 12 to 17 met the criteria of addiction.” Those “in the same age group who tried prescription opioids had a similar addiction rate of 11.2%.”

When Pot Use Starts In Teens, Drug Addiction More Likely: Study.

[HealthDay](#) (3/30, 11K) reports a [study](#) published in JAMA Pediatrics suggests “teens who try marijuana or other drugs are at greater risk of developing a drug addiction than those who wait a few years before experimenting with drugs.” National Institute on Drug Abuse Director and the study co-lead author Dr. Nora Volkow said, “Though not everyone who uses a drug will develop addiction, adolescents may develop addiction to substances faster than young adults. ... This study provides further evidence that delaying substance exposure until the brain is more fully developed may lower risk for developing a substance use disorder.” [\(Article attached.\)](#)

New York Poised To Legalize Recreational Marijuana.

The [AP](#) (3/28, Villeneuve, Peltz, Matthews) reports New York “lawmakers reached a deal to allow sales of” marijuana for recreational use. The deal “reached Saturday would expand the state’s existing medical marijuana program and set up a licensing and taxation system for recreational sales,” and a vote is expected on Tuesday. However, “sales wouldn’t start until New York sets up rules and a proposed cannabis board.”

Program Tackles Vaccine Access, Hesitancy Among SUD Patients.

[PatientEngagementHIT](#) (3/26, Nelson) reported, “The Foundation for Opioid Response Efforts (FORE) and the Addiction Policy Forum (APF) have launched a health equity program that will dismantle COVID-19 vaccine access barriers and

tackle high rates of vaccine hesitancy among individuals with substance use disorder.” The initiative “was announced during a webinar on addiction, vaccines, and COVID-19 featuring Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, Anthony Fauci, MD, and Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, Nora Volkow, MD.” Supported by “a FORE grant of \$125,843, the program will provide ‘vaccine navigators’ to individuals with substance use disorder including those in treatment or recovery.”

Vermont Opioid Deaths Rose 38% In 2020, Analysis Finds.

The [Burlington \(VT\) Free Press](#) (3/26, Bakuli, 85K) reported Vermont Health Department annual data indicate “there was a 38% increase in the number of fatalities involving opioid drugs” in 2020. The department shared the preliminary analysis of statistics on Thursday. According to the article, “The synthetic opioid fentanyl accounted for 88% of the opioid-related deaths in Vermont in 2020, according to the health department.”

Opinion: Opioid Crisis Started From Good Intentions By Public Health Authorities.

In an opinion for the [New York Daily News](#) (3/27, 2.51M), Peter Pischke wrote that the opioid crisis was “responsible for killing more than 80,000 Americans in 2020 alone.” He argued that “the crisis started from good intentions by public health authorities,” such as the FDA and the CDC, highlighting actions taken to address the crisis and what he views as their unintended effects. Pischke concluded, “Let there be no doubt, responsibility for” deaths attributable to illegal drugs “and lives ruined rest squarely on the CDC: its apathy, its dogma, its refusal to take responsibility – human lives be damned.”

Telehealth Usage Accounted For 23.6% Of All Interactions During First Four Months Of Pandemic, Study Indicates.

[Healthcare IT News](#) (3/25, Jercich, 2K) reports that a study “published this week in the Journal of the American Medical Association Network Open supports existing data showing skyrocketing telehealth rates amid the pandemic.” In this study of 36 million people, it was shown that “during the first four months of the pandemic, telehealth visits accounted for 23.6% of all interactions – compared with 0.3% of contacts in 2019.”

Biden Delays Selecting New FDA Commissioner.

[CNN](#) (3/30, Collins, 89.21M) reports President Biden has yet to name a permanent FDA commissioner, “leaving the agency without permanent leadership as it plays a critical role in the pandemic response, including overseeing the development and

authorization of coronavirus vaccines.” The FDA “is currently being run by” acting FDA Commissioner Dr. Janet Woodcock, who “is one of the two candidates under consideration for the job.” However, she “has received stiff opposition from a handful of lawmakers over her handling of the opioid epidemic – pushback that some worry could imperil her chances.” The article adds, “The fierce public discussion over who will be the next FDA commissioner is unusual, but the role has only become more prominent since the coronavirus pandemic and former President Trump’s repeated assault on the agency.”

FDA Can Do More To Ensure Diversity In Clinical Trials, Experts Say.

[Endpoints News](#) (3/29, Brennan) reports, “Experts convened on Monday as part of a workshop at the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, and discussed whether the FDA might take a more prominent role in advocating for more diversity, among other topics to inform the ongoing work of the National Academies Committee on Improving the Representation of Women and Underrepresented Minorities in Clinical Trials and Research.” Former FDA commissioner Rob Califf said that the agency “has an unrecognized ability to badger sponsors along the way.” The article adds, “Marsha Henderson, the FDA’s former associate commissioner for women’s health, also explained the importance of advocacy in pushing for diversity, noting that one of the only reasons an increasing number of women are now enrolled in clinical trials is because there was a consistent voice.” These “comments follow similar sentiments expressed by FDA acting commissioner Janet Woodcock and NIH director Francis Collins.”

Reno’s Talkspace Experiment Highlights Disruptive Battle Over Virtual Therapy.

[STAT](#) (3/29, Aguilar, 262K) reports on how Reno, Nevada’s controversial plan to spend “coronavirus relief funding on virtual therapy through the app Talkspace” highlights “the broader tensions between conventional therapy and the cash-flush companies racing to disrupt it.” While “therapists are skeptical of the quality of care delivered by Talkspace and startups offering similar services,” advocates argue the apps “are effective and that they fill a gap in the nation’s tattered mental health system.”

Funding Opportunities



GRANTS & FUNDING

NIH Central Resource for Grants and Funding Information

[NOT-AA-21-009](#)

[Notice of Clarification of Research Priorities for RFA-AA-21-002 "SARS-CoV-2, COVID-19 and Consequences of Alcohol Use \(R01 Clinical Trial Not Allowed\) "](#)

[NOT-AA-21-010](#)

[Notice of Clarification of Research Priorities for RFA-AA-21-003 "SARS-CoV-2, COVID-19 and Consequences of Alcohol Use \(R03 Clinical Trial Not Allowed\) "](#)

[NOT-AA-21-011](#)

[Notice of Clarification of Research Priorities for RFA-AA-21-004 "SARS-CoV-2, COVID-19 and Consequences of Alcohol Use \(R21 Clinical Trial Not Allowed\)"](#)

[RFA-MD-21-004](#)

[Understanding and Addressing the Impact of Structural Racism and Discrimination on Minority Health and Health Disparities \(R01 Clinical Trial Optional\)](#)

[PAR-21-183](#)

[Developing Digital Therapeutics for Substance Use Disorders \(UG3/UH3 Clinical Trial optional\)](#)

[NOT-DA-21-033](#)

[Notice of Special Interest \(NOSI\): Basic Research on Fentanyl and Synthetic Fentanyl Analogs: Signaling, Neurobiology, and Pharmacology](#)

[NOT-AA-21-008](#)

[Notice of Information: NIAAA Clinical Medications Development Testing Program](#)

[NOT-DA-21-036](#)

[Notice of Change to Key Dates for NIDA RFA-DA-22-004, " Exploratory studies to investigate mechanisms of HIV infection, replication, latency, and/or pathogenesis in the context of substance use disorders \(R61/R33 - Clinical Trial Not Allowed\)"](#)

[NOT-OD-21-068](#)

[Notice of Special Interest \(NOSI\) to add harassment as an area of interest to Research to Understand and Inform Interventions that Promote the Research Careers of Individuals in the Biomedical Sciences](#)

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