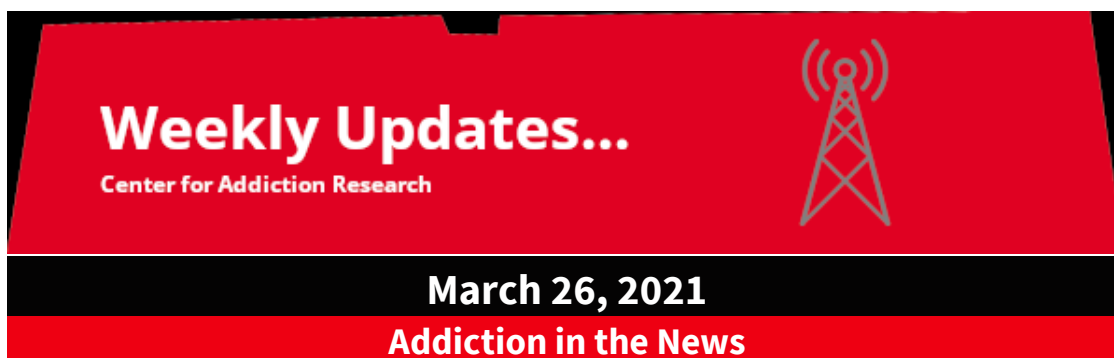


Welcome to the weekly newsletter from the Center for Addiction Research! Each newsletter includes highlights from addiction in the news topics, active funding opportunities offered by NIDA/NIAAA, and information about any new publications from CAR members. Please email Jen Rowe ([roweji@ucmail.uc.edu](mailto:roweji@ucmail.uc.edu)) 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**

### **Behind closed doors, Kentucky's opioid epidemic is wreaking havoc. Together, we can help**

[Courier Journal](#) - Desiree Powell - Opinion contributor

As a substance use disorder survivor, I know the importance of speaking out about the struggles and realities of addiction that are often kept behind closed doors. I also know how important it is to not feel alone, to recognize that others – elected officials, community leaders, employers – can and will help. Because allowing a person like me to walk through a door that was once closed can make all the difference in beating addiction. Kentucky has made progress in recent years to fight substance use disorder...

## **National News**

### **THC Found In Breast Milk Up To 6 Weeks After Abstinence.**

[Healio](#) (3/24, Downey, 40K) reports, "Women continued to excrete THC in breast milk for at least 6 weeks after abstaining from using marijuana, according to a [study](#) published in JAMA Pediatrics." Erica M. Wymore, "MD, MPH, a specialist in neonatal and perinatal medicine at Children's Hospital Colorado, and colleagues performed a prospective, observational pharmacokinetic study of women with prenatal marijuana use who delivered infants between Nov. 1, 2016 and June 30, 2019." In a

perspective accompanying the article, [Dr. Nora D. Volkow, Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse](#), writes: “It’s a small study, but it provides some very intriguing information that cannot be ignored, and that brings up a series of questions regarding the importance of having a better understanding of the bioavailability in the exposure of babies that may be drinking milk from their mothers who have been smoking marijuana.”

### **NFL, Players Association Seeking Pain Management Alternatives.**

The [AP](#) (3/5, Maaddi) reported, “The NFL is taking steps to learn more about different ways to help players manage pain” and has “asked researchers with experience conducting controlled, experimental studies related to pain management to submit information that may be useful in treating players.”

Together with the NFL Players Associations, the League’s joint pain management committee “wants to know about alternatives to opioids, including CBD (cannabidiol) and other cannabis-derivative products, that may help players recover from sports-specific and musculoskeletal injuries.”

### **Number Of Americans Over 65 Using Cannabis Jumps Sharply, Survey Shows.**

The [New York Times](#) (3/20, Span, 20.6M) reported, “Even before the pandemic, researchers were reporting on the growing popularity of cannabis among older adults, although the proportion using it (or at least acknowledging its use) remained small.” Last spring, an analysis “based on the National Survey of Drug Use and Health found that marijuana use in the prior year among people over 65 had jumped 75 percent from 2015 to 2018, from 2.4 percent of that group to 4.2 percent. By 2019, use had reached 5 percent.”

### **Medical Cannabis Studies Ramp Up, Offering Hope To Some Opioid Users.**

The [Portland \(ME\) Press Herald](#) (3/19, LaClaire, 174K) reports a growing number of patients “swear by medical cannabis not only as a treatment option for chronic pain, but also as a substitute for prescription opioids used in pain management.”

According to the article, “In the past few years, more researchers have started studying this possibility, but their work has yielded different and often contradictory results.” Since 2015, the “National Institute on Drug Abuse has funded research surrounding the therapeutic benefits of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD) for the treatment of pain as an alternative to opioids, addiction and other disorders. ... In 2015, the institute devoted \$21 million to the research. It’s estimated that 2020 spending was about \$48 million. Funding for all research into cannabis also has increased, from \$111 million in 2015 to an estimated \$196 million in 2020.”

## **Mexico On The Verge Of Legalizing Marijuana, Which Could Pressure Biden To Follow Suit.**

[Politico](#) (3/11, Demko, Bustillo, 6.73M) reports, “Mexico is on the verge of creating the world’s largest legal marijuana market, a move that could pressure President Joe Biden to embrace weed, too.” On Thursday morning, Mexico’s Chamber of Deputies passed landmark legislation “ahead of a April 30 deadline set by the country’s Supreme Court to legalize recreational sales. The Senate is expected to back the bill in the coming days.” Mexico’s president is expected to sign the measure. The article mentions California Attorney General Xavier Becerra’s nomination for HHS Secretary.

## **Drug Information Association (DIA):**

Use Of CBD Sublingual Product May Reduce Severe Anxiety, Anxiety-Related Symptoms, Small Study Suggests

[Healio](#) (3/18, Gramigna) reports, “Use of a cannabidiol [CBD] sublingual product may reduce severe anxiety and anxiety-related symptoms,” investigators concluded in a study in which “14 patients received 10 mg/ml of CBD” across four weeks. The findings were presented at the Anxiety and Depression Association of America annual conference (virtual).

## **Vaping Marijuana Linked To Lung Injury In Teens, Study Says.**

[CNN](#) (3/3, LaMotte, 89.21M) reports, “Teens are about twice as likely to report ‘wheezing or whistling’ in the chest after vaping marijuana than after smoking cigarettes or using e-cigarettes, a new study has found.” According to CNN, “Vaping weed is associated with a dangerous, newly identified lung disease called EVALI,” which “was first identified by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in August 2019.” The [study](#) (3/3), published in the Journal of Adolescent Health, was “a national longitudinal study of the health impact of tobacco use administered by the National Institutes of Health and the US Food and Drug Administration.”

## **Pandemic Spurs Increase In Smoking.**

[Forbes](#) (3/19, Sarkis, 10.33M) reported, “It may come at no surprise to many that cigarette sales have increased during the Covid-19 pandemic. A combination of an already existing addiction, quarantine, boredom, anxiety, and depression have contributed to an increase in unhealthy coping behaviors.” While smoking cessation programs “were strongly encouraged by medical professionals during the pandemic, it appears that there was actually an increase in smoking.” Out of current smokers, “25% reported smoking more than before, while 50.9% reported smoking the same amount as before the pandemic. Only 20.2% reported a decrease in smoking.”

## **NIH Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR)**

### **Certain state policies unintentionally increase overdose mortality for those with opioid use disorders**

To address the growing opioid epidemic, policymakers have focused largely on controlling the prescription and use of opioid analgesics through the implementation of supply-side drug policies and harm-reduction policy measures. However, these policies have not yet been evaluated for their impact on indicators of prescription opioid abuse. In a **study funded by the NIDA**, scientists evaluated whether US state drug policies were associated with variation in opioid misuse, opioid use disorder, and drug overdose mortality. [Read More](#)

### **San Francisco Hires New Behavioral Health Czar To Manage Network Of Substance Use, Mental Healthcare Programs.**

The [San Francisco Chronicle](#) (3/3, Thadani, 2.44M) reports **San Francisco has hired Dr. Hillary Kunins as the new Behavioral Health Services director at the Department of Public Health, where she will manage the city's "sprawling network of substance use and mental health care programs."** The article adds that this is "a critical position that has been held by acting directors for the last two years amid a deadly drug epidemic and an often-crowded psychiatric emergency room." According to the article, **"About 700 people died of an overdose in 2020, a nearly 60% jump over the year prior, mostly due to fentanyl."**

### **Editorial: COVID-19 Has Driven Alarming Increase In Opioid Overdoses.**

[Bloomberg Opinion](#) (3/10) editorializes, **"Since 1999, when the unconstrained prescription of painkillers was beginning to emerge as a public-health crisis, more than 535,000 lives have been lost to opioid overdoses.** If that grim number seems familiar, it's just a bit higher than Covid-19's toll of 527,000 deaths so far. Covid-19 and the opioid crisis are linked in other ways, too. **The pandemic has driven an alarming increase in overdose fatalities over the past year, as people struggling to recover from opioid dependence have been undone by isolation, job loss and the added difficulty of getting support and treatment with social-distancing rules in effect."**

### **Law enforcement seizures of methamphetamine and marijuana rose during pandemic**

An analysis of law enforcement seizures of illegal drugs in five key regions of the United States revealed a rise in methamphetamine and marijuana (cannabis) confiscations during the COVID-19 pandemic. **Seizures of the two drugs were higher at their peak in August 2020 than at any time in the year prior to the pandemic.** While investigators found that trends in heroin, cocaine and fentanyl seizures were not affected by the pandemic, provisional overdose death data show that the increased drug mortality seen in 2019 rose further through the first half of 2020. **The findings suggest that the pandemic and its related restrictions may have impacted**

the availability and demand of some, but not all, illegal drugs, and that availability may have increased in summer and fall of 2020 in the five regions included in this study. "Shifts in drug seizures in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic": <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0376871621000752>

### **Mother Of Stillborn Baby Who Tested Positive For Meth Requests Reduced Bail.**

The AP (3/9, Har) reports, "A judge is expected to consider...whether to" approve reduced bail for murder suspect Chelsea Becker. Becker, who was "charged with murder after delivering a stillborn baby who tested positive for methamphetamine," would check into a substance use disorder treatment facility if her reduced bail request is approved during a Tuesday court hearing. The Becker "case has outraged advocates of pregnant women who say overzealous prosecutors are trying to punish a woman who needs treatment, and not prison time." HHS Secretary nominee Xavier Becerra "sent a friend of the court brief stating that [California's homicide] law was never meant to apply to pregnant women and urging the charges be dropped. Yet Kings County Superior Court Judge Robert Shane has declined to do so."

### **NIDA Notes:**

People with SUDs Have Increased Risk for COVID-19 and Worse Outcomes

People with a substance use disorder (SUD) at any time in their lives are 1.5 times more likely to contract COVID-19 than those without an SUD, and those with a recent SUD are more than 8 times more likely. [Read more](#)

### **Amid Covid-19, Spiking Overdose Deaths Fall To Back Burner In Washington.**

STAT (3/2, Facher, 262K) reports that while Washington treated the US epidemic of increasing drug overdose deaths "as a top priority just two years ago, the coronavirus pandemic has made it an afterthought." STAT adds, "With a brand-new Congress and President Biden still in his first months as president, however, many advocates see 2021 as a historic opportunity to regain lawmakers' attention." National Institute on Drug Abuse director Nora Volkow said, "2020 has by far the highest number of deaths ever recorded." While "Biden hasn't yet outlined any detailed plans to address addiction issues, he has already signaled they will not be entirely back-burnered." For instance, Biden "appointed two veteran federal addiction policy officials, Regina LaBelle and Tom Coderre, as acting heads of the Office of National Drug Control Policy and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, respectively."

### **Black Americans Suffering Heaviest Toll From Uptick In Overdose Deaths Amid Pandemic, Research Suggests.**

NPR (3/3, Mann, 3.69M) reports CDC scientists "say fatal drug overdoses nationwide have surged roughly 20% during the pandemic, killing more than 83,000 people in 2020." Although "the CDC doesn't track overdose deaths by race, a growing body of

research suggests Black Americans have suffered the heaviest toll.” For example, researchers “analyzed drug overdose data collected in Philadelphia during the pandemic,” and “found overdose deaths surged more than 50% among the city’s Black residents.” Meanwhile, among whites, “drug overdose fatalities remained flat and in some months even declined.” The researchers’ findings were published in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

### **Younger Americans Are Dying At Increasing Rate, Report Warns.**

[CNN](#) (3/2, Prior, 89.21M) says a new [report](#) published Tuesday by the National Academies of Sciences warns that “Younger and middle-age Americans have been dying at higher rates over the past three decades, marking what is becoming a public health crisis across the US workforce.” The growing causes of death include “drug overdose, alcohol use and suicides,” as well as “cardiometabolic conditions, which include diabetes and heart diseases.” What’s more, “between 2014 and 2017, life expectancy fell for three years in a row,” the “largest sustained decline in life expectancy since the 1918 flu pandemic.” However, the report “offered a number of recommendations to address the increased death rates, including strengthening regulatory control of prescription drugs and improving access to substance abuse and mental health services.”

### **Paving The Way For Diversity In Clinical Trials.**

[WebMD](#) (3/23, Young, 4.27M) reports on the lack of diversity in clinical trials, quoting experts and patients on their experiences with such instances. WebMD adds, “In 2020, the FDA approved 53 new drugs,” and of the 32,000 patients that participated in these trials, “on average, 75% were white, 8% were Black, 6% were Asian, and 11% were Hispanic.” National Cancer Institute nurse consultant Andrea Denicoff, who has “been involved in clinical research at the NIH for 35 years,” said, “It’s really important that our publicly funded trials represent the people of the country. ... There are some cancers that we’re doing a good job in enrolling minorities, and other cancers we need to do a much better job in having a diverse representation in our trials.”

### **US Government Begins Using Randomized Trials To Look At Ways Of Financing Healthcare.**

The [New York Times](#) (3/19, Finkelstein, 20.6M) reported the US government “has begun experimenting with multiple randomized trials – involving hundreds of thousands of patients nationwide – of different ways of financing health care.” Now, “in a series of experiments that could herald a new era in policy evaluation, the government is applying randomized testing to health care financing.” This “could have broad implications because the U.S. health care sector is unusually innovative, constantly pioneering new technologies and ways of paying for them.”

### **Pandemic Cost NIH \$16 Billion In Delayed, Lost Medical Research.**

[Bloomberg Law](#) (3/19, Baumann, Subscription Publication, 4K) reported behind a paywall, “The National Institutes of Health delayed and lost approximately \$16 billion worth of research due to the pandemic, the agency told Bloomberg Law.” That amount “constitutes more than a third of the NIH’s current spending level of \$42.9 billion.” It is “a \$6 billion increase from the amount agency director Francis S. Collins estimated last May when he told a Senate panel the pandemic will cost about \$10 billion.” Anthony S. Fauci “told the same Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee on Thursday the pandemic has affected the NIH’s ability to do research in areas other than Covid-19.”

### **PrEP Implant May Protect Against HIV For A Year.**

[MedPage Today](#) (3/9, Susman, 183K) reports, “Pharmacokinetic data indicated that an implant that elutes islatravir, an antiretroviral agent, could protect people at-risk of contracting HIV for at least a year, positioning it as a potential form of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), researchers reported.” In the “trial in which people at low risk of HIV-infection were implanted with three different doses of islatravir, blood levels of islatravir remained well above the level considered sufficient for protection against infection at week 12, according to” Merck senior scientist Randolph Matthews, MD, PhD, who presented the findings during the virtual Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections. NIAID senior investigator Richard Koup, MD, noted, “With PrEP, there is no such thing as one size fits all.”

### **Biden To Direct \$2.5 Billion To Address Mental Health, Addiction Crisis.**

[Axios](#) (3/11, Mucha, 1.26M) reports that President Biden is directing \$2.5 billion to address the mental illness and addiction crisis, according to an official from the Department of Health and Human Services. Axios says \$1.65 billion will go toward the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant while \$825 million will be allocated through a Community Mental Health Services Block Grant program. Axios says “confronting the mounting mental health and substance abuse crisis will be an imperative for the Biden administration, even as its primary focus is on combating the broader COVID-19 pandemic.”

### **HHS Asks Healthcare Participants For Advice On Incorporating SDOHs Into Patient Records.**

[Bloomberg Law](#) (3/11, Brown, Subscription Publication, 4K) reports behind a paywall that HHS “is asking health-care industry participants for advice on how to collect information about transportation, housing, employment, schooling, and other factors that have a large impact on peoples’ health.” HHS on Thursday “asked for public comment about how to create standardized data elements for ‘social determinants of health’ that would eventually be included in electronic health records systems.” The “disproportionate impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on



disadvantaged groups and neighborhoods has brought new attention to living conditions outside the formal health-care system that can vastly alter peoples' propensity toward illness.”

## 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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