

**January 2020 Newsletter**  
**Prepared by Van Scoyoc Associates**

**FDA REVEALS FLAVOR RESTRICTIONS FOR E-CIGARETTES**

On January 2, the FDA [issued a policy prioritizing enforcement](#) against certain unauthorized flavored e-cigarette products that appeal to kids, including fruit and mint flavors. Read more [here](#).

**DEATHS TIED TO ALCOHOL ON THE RISE**

According to a new study from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, alcohol played a role in more than 72,000 deaths in 2017, a figure that accounts for roughly 2.6 percent of all deaths in the U.S. that year. Read more [here](#).

**FATAL OPIOID OVERDOSES DECLINE**

States that have expanded eligibility for Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act had lower opioid overdose death rates on average compared with non-expansion states, according to a new study by researchers at several universities. Read more [here](#).

**FDA DEFENDS OPIOIDS FOR CHRONIC PAIN**

According to documents prepared for an advisory committee meeting to consider a new drug targeted for long-term back pain, FDA said on January 10 that opioids have a role in treating chronic pain despite the country's struggle with misuse of the drugs when prescribed for this purpose. Read more [here](#).

**FDA PANEL VOTES DOWN NEW CHRONIC PAIN OPIOID**

Members of two FDA advisory committees unanimously voted against approving Nektar Therapeutics' oxycodone opioid for management of chronic low back pain. Read more [here](#).

**GOP LAWMAKERS PRESS OPIOID MAKERS ABOUT PRACTICES LEADING TO CRISIS**

On January 14, Energy and Commerce Committee Republican Leaders sent letters to top opioid manufacturers pushing for answers on their practices leading up to the opioid crisis, including interactions with the Food and Drug Administration. Read more [here](#).

**LAWMAKERS RAISE ALARM OVER METH**

At a January 14 House Energy and Commerce Committee hearing on the opioid crisis, members flagged the rising overdose deaths linked to methamphetamines, with Rep. Diana DeGette (D-CO) characterizing the stimulants as the "fourth wave" of a two decades long drug epidemic. Read more [here](#).

**BIPARTISAN COMMITTEE LEADERS RAISE CONCERNS OVER INCREASED USE OF STIMULANTS**

On January 14, top Democrats and Republicans on the House Energy and Commerce Committee expressed concern over increased use of stimulants including cocaine and meth in letters to HHS Secretary Alex Azar and the acting heads of the DHS and the DEA and asked for a briefing from the three agencies. Read more [here](#).

**SENATE EXTENDS SCHEDULING OF FENTANYL**

On January 16, the Senate passed by unanimous consent legislation to extend the DEA's temporary order making fentanyl-related substances Schedule I. Read more [here](#).

**E-CIG USE DROVE OUTBREAK OF VAPING ILLNESSES**

A CDC official said the explosion of e-cigarette use among young people played a big role in the outbreak of vaping-related lung illnesses that's killed at least 57 people and sickened more than 2,600. Read more [here](#).

### **NIDA DIRECTOR TESTIFIES AT HOUSE CANNABIS POLICIES HEARING**

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) Director Nora Volkow, MD, testified at a January 15 hearing titled “Cannabis Policies for the New Decade” before the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health. Dr. Volkow outlined barriers to increased research on Schedule I substances and cannabis specifically. Read more [here](#).

### **OPIOIDS STOPS BEING " PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY" AFTER HHS DOESN'T RENEW STATUS**

For nine days, the nation's opioid crisis was no longer considered a "public health emergency" after the Trump administration failed to renew a two-year-old declaration that expired last week. Read more [here](#).

### **PARTIAL OPIATE REFILLS TO BE DISCLOSED**

Health-care payers and providers will know whether potentially addictive drugs, including opioids and fentanyl, are being filled properly at retail pharmacies under a final rule issued on January 23. Read more [here](#).

### **SMOKING CESSATION: A REPORT OF THE SURGEON GENERAL**

On January 23, 2020, Vice Admiral Jerome Adams, U.S. Surgeon General, released “Smoking Cessation: A Report of the Surgeon General.” The report highlights the latest evidence on the health benefits of quitting smoking and proven treatments and strategies to help people successfully quit. Read more [here](#).

### **AFTER OPIOID OVERDOSE YOUNG PEOPLE AREN'T GETTING TREATMENT**

In a study of more than 3,600 individuals, aged 13-22, who survived an opioid overdose, an NIH-funded team found that only about one-third received any kind of follow-up addiction treatment. Read more [here](#).

### **DRUG OVERDOSE DEATHS DOWN FOR FIRST TIME IN YEARS**

On January 30, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention released the latest drug overdose death data, and for the first time in years, it decreased. Read more [here](#).