

April 2020 Newsletter
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COLLISION OF COVID-19 AND ADDICTION EPIDEMICS

In a paper published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, Dr. Nora Volkow addresses the intersection of the COVID-19 national health emergency and the concurrent epidemic of drug overdose deaths, including how the serious health risks of COVID-19 pose unique challenges to people who smoke or vape, are already struggling with substance use disorders, or are in recovery from addiction. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

CMS GUIDANCE ON TELEHEALTH OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE ACCESS TO SUD SERVICES

On April 2, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services released an Informational Bulletin to states that identifies opportunities to increase access to substance use disorder services and treatment using telehealth in the Medicaid program. Read more [here](#).

VOLKOW ADDRESSES STIGMA AND THE TOLL OF ADDICTION

In a perspective piece published on April 2 in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, Dr. Nora Volkow addresses how stigma against people who use drugs, including by healthcare providers, can sabotage effective treatment. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

DEA TO PERMIT MORE PRODUCTION OF CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES FOR VIRUS

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) announced April 7 that it is [increasing Aggregate Production Quotas](#) (APQ) available to pharmaceutical manufacturers for the production of controlled substance medications that are in high demand due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Read more [here](#).

SIGNIFICANT WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS ASSOCIATED WITH REGULAR MARIJUNANA USE

In a new meta-analysis recently published in JAMA, researchers investigated prevalence of withdrawal syndrome and risk factors for withdrawal syndrome among regular marijuana users. Read more [here](#).

ABCD STUDY RENEWED FOR ADDITIONAL SEVEN YEARS

On April 15, the NIH announced that the [Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development](#) (ABCD) Study was renewed for an additional seven years. Read more [here](#).

FDA SHIFTS ITS COVID-19 STANCE ON VAPING, SMOKING IMPACT

On April 15, the Food and Drug Administration modified its stance on COVID-19 and vaping, saying it has an unknown effect on the risk of the new coronavirus, while warning that smoking can create worse outcomes. Read more [here](#).

DRS. COLLINS AND VOLKOW TALK ABOUT COVID-19 AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS

Dr. Francis Collins and Dr. Nora Volkow shared [video](#) of a recent conversation they had highlighting portions of their dialogue that focused on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on individuals struggling with substance abuse disorders, along with all those who are trying to help them. Read more [here](#).

COVID-19 INFORMATION FOR NIH RESEARCHERS

The NIH Office of Extramural Research continues to update its webpage with COVID-19 information relevant to NIH grant applicants and recipients of NIH research funding. Read more [here](#).

NIH PUBLISHES OVERVIEW OF COVID-19 RESPONSE FOR APPLICANTS AND GRANTEES

The NIH published a [Word document](#) and [slide deck](#) providing information for NIH applicants and grantees related to COVID-19 and research activities. Topics include: patient care and researcher safety, NIH operating status, funding opportunities, donation of research supplies, and application deadlines. NIH has also established a COVID-19 [“Updates History” webpage](#) for applicants and grantees.

CDC NOTICE ON MANAGING ACUTE AND CHRONIC PAIN

On April 17, the CDC issued a request for comment on the management of acute and chronic pain. The Federal Register notice solicits perspectives on and experiences with pain and pain management, including but not limited to the benefits and harms of opioid use, from patients with acute or chronic pain, patients' family members and/or caregivers, and health care providers who care for patients with pain or conditions that can complicate pain management. Written comments must be received on or before June 16, 2020. Read more [here](#).

LETTER ON LOOSENING BUPRENORPHINE PRESCRIBING

On April 17, Senators Markey (D-MA), Warren (D-MA), Shaheen (D-NH) and Feinstein (D-CA) sent a letter to HHS Secretary Azar and Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use McCance Katz asking that the Administration loosen prescribing requirements around buprenorphine. Read more [here](#).

FDA WARNS CBD COMPANIES OVER OPIOID ADDICTION CLAIMS

On April 23, the FDA sent warning letters to two CBD companies for marketing their products as potential treatments for opioid addiction. Read more [here](#).

ONDCP ISSUES LETTER ON SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER TREATMENT AS ESSENTIAL MEDICAL SERVICE

On April 24, the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) issued a letter declaring substance use disorder treatment an essential medical service and clarifying that personal protective equipment (PPE) ordered and requested by facilities for treating SUD patients is a “legitimate need and purpose.” Read more [here](#).

RESEARCH RELIEF REQUESTED FOR NEXT STIMULUS PACKAGE

On April 29, Reps. Diana DeGette (D-CO) and Fred Upton (R-MI) sent a letter to Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) proposing that the next virus relief package include \$26 billion to address the challenges faced by the U.S. scientific research workforce during the COVID-19 crisis. Read more [here](#).