

Opioid-Related News and the Courts

Weekly Review

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National

[Pharma executive blames vague DEA rules for opioid epidemic](#)

ABC News

A drug company executive testifying in a landmark trial against three large opioid distributors has continued to blame the Drug Enforcement Administration for West Virginia's addiction epidemic, saying his company's internal controls went beyond what regulations require.

David May, the vice president of corporate security and diversion control for the AmerisourceBergen Drug Co., testified Monday that the company's abuse prevention systems have gone beyond the DEA's expectations and federal regulations, and have been improved over the years through more digital monitoring and training, according to [The Herald-Dispatch](#).

National

[A more powerful naloxone is on the way. The question is whether it's needed.](#)

Washington Post

With deaths from opioids soaring again, the Food and Drug Administration last month approved a more powerful version of the fast-acting antidote naloxone, an emergency medicine that restores breathing halted by overdoses of fentanyl, heroin or oxycodone.

In approving just the second version of the lifesaving nasal spray, the FDA allowed a pharmaceutical company to double the strength of the product, from the 4-milligram doses available now to 8 milligrams of the ingredient in each dose.

But there is widespread disagreement about the value of more potent naloxone.

Some research shows that more than 4 milligrams is seldom needed. Some experts and harm reduction advocates, who work to reduce death on the streets, said the decision was driven by false beliefs that the increasing potency of illegal fentanyl requires a stronger antidote and by the marketing strategy of the drug company, Hikma Pharmaceuticals. Some are concerned stronger naloxone could cause harm by precipitating intense, rapid withdrawal from opioids.

Alaska

[State updates guidance for medications for addiction treatment](#)

KDLL

Just two years ago, the state released its first MAT Guide — a comprehensive set of recommendations for healthcare providers treating opioid use disorder.

But a lot has changed since then, down to the name of the treatment. Back then, MAT stood for “Medication Assisted Treatment.” Now, it’s “Medications for Addiction Treatment.”

It’s one of many changes outlined in the 2021 MAT Guide. The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services released the new guide this week.

Michigan

[A treatment barrier falls, but more remain, for people with opioid issues](#)

University of Michigan

Recently, the federal government [removed one of the biggest hurdles](#) to buprenorphine prescribing. Prescribers no longer have to go through hours of carefully scripted special training before they can seek permission to offer it. And those who prescribe it to less than 30 patients no longer have to certify that they can connect patients to additional counseling.

It’s a big policy change, and one that the addiction medicine community had lobbied for.

But experts from the University of Michigan and elsewhere say it’s not the only thing that needs to happen in order to increase the chances that more of the millions of Americans with opioid use disorder can get access to this evidence-based treatment.

Ohio

[Opinion: Pandemic created perfect storm for addiction to flourish](#)

Cincinnati.com

Nicole L. Sanders is the judge of the Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas, Drug Court Division.

The opioid epidemic rages on as we are socially distanced and increasingly isolated. Recent provisional data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention listed May 2020 as having the highest number of overdose deaths in a 12-month period ever recorded.

We are experiencing a perfect storm for addiction to flourish. The opioid epidemic collided headfirst with the COVID-19 pandemic, which has resulted in an out-of-

control public health and safety crisis. For too many families in Hamilton County, addiction has compounded the everyday challenges that have come with the pandemic.

Fortunately, though, we have the tools to help families struggling with addiction with high-quality treatment and recovery services. Hamilton County has Ohio's oldest drug court, which promotes collaboration between the judiciary, prosecutors, community corrections agencies, drug treatment providers and other community support groups to give those struggling with addiction the help they need to recover. I believe that the Hamilton County Drug Court is a problem-solving court. And to solve a public health and safety crisis, we need to improve access to programs with positive, evidence-based outcomes for families. This work is already underway.

Virginia

[Roanoke addiction recovery specialist welcomes changes to guidelines for medication-assisted treatment](#)

WDBJ

Within the last month, the Department of Health and Human services [made it easier](#) for more health care providers to prescribe a drug that could help people suffering from addiction.

One local expert on [addiction] Cheri Hartman said on the WDBJ Digital News Desk, that the changes could open up more resources for recovery for people living in rural communities.

During our conversation, which was originally recorded April 28, Hartman began by explaining that buprenorphine is a drug that's been approved to help stave off dope sickness in people recovering from opioid use disorder. It's a method addiction specialists like Hartman say are proven to help the recovery process far better than quitting an opioid altogether.

"It does develop as other chronic diseases do and warrants medical diagnosis and treatment," she said.