



Brandeis ▪ Harvard

NIDA CENTER

To Improve **System Performance Of
Substance Use Disorder** Treatment

SUPPORTED BY THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON DRUG ABUSE

January 2022 Newsletter

Center Spotlight



"The core problem is not quality, the core problem is not cost, the core problem is access."

Center hosts symposium on the future of telehealth for behavioral health care

On June 24, 2021, the Brandeis-Harvard NIDA Center, along with the Schneider Institutes for Health Policy and Research at the Heller School, co-hosted a panel discussion, "[The Future of Telehealth for Behavioral Health Care: Issues for Guiding Policy and Practice](#)." With an introduction by Center Director Dr. Connie Horgan, Center researchers Dr. Alisa Busch and Dr. Haiden Huskamp were joined by Jonathan Ciampi, Dr. Ken Duckworth, Dr. Ateev Mehrotra, and Dr. Donovan Wong. This panel represented innovative telehealth providers, insurance companies, and consumer and family organizations. They discussed what we have learned about telehealth for behavioral health during the COVID-19 pandemic, what its future in the treatment of substance use disorders and mental health should be, and the regulatory and payment policies that are needed to support that role in the future.

Dr. Ken Duckworth noted, "We're in a phase of disruption and I would encourage people to think about the supply and demand mismatch. **The core problem is not quality, the core problem is not cost, the core problem is access** and every tech idea that's pitched to me, I look at it through that lens... It's a decentralized system and the providers are crushed with demand... **you have to become a master advocate just to get care.**"



Addiction Health Services Research Conference

The Institute for Behavioral Health at Brandeis University's Heller School for Social Policy and Management hosted the [Addiction Health Services Research Conference](#) virtually on October 13-15. Chaired by Center researcher Dr. Sharon Reif, the conference featured three days of programming including workshops, plenaries, and lightning talks on topics from stakeholder engagement to GIS methods to harm reduction services in the COVID-19 era. The Brandeis-Harvard NIDA Center once again facilitated the popular mentoring program, with over 60 matches this year between early career investigators and expert researchers. The program allows mentees to address a range of topics, including career development, networking, and proposal planning. Mentoring matches often kickstart ongoing relationships and future opportunities for collaboration.



Maureen Stewart receives NIAAA grant to study disparities in alcohol treatment

Center researcher Dr. Maureen Stewart and colleagues received a [5-year grant](#)

[to examine access and quality of alcohol use disorder treatment for people enrolled in Medicaid managed care plans.](#) The project will focus specifically on disparities based on race and ethnicity, gender, and geographic location.

“Alcohol use disorder is a serious problem. More than 95,000 Americans die annually from alcohol use,” says Stewart. “Less than 10 percent of people with alcohol use disorder access treatment, and **although rates of alcohol disorders are high among women and racial and ethnic minority populations, these groups are the least likely to access treatment and have high rates of alcohol-related morbidity and mortality.**” According to co-investigator Dr. Rachel Sayko Adams, “This study has potential to illuminate Medicaid policies that can be scaled-up and adapted to improve treatment for people that face barriers to receiving care, including racial/ethnic minorities, women and people from rural communities.”

Recent Activities



FRIENDS
— OF —
NIAAA

Haiden Huskamp joins panel on telehealth for alcohol use disorder

Dr. Haiden Huskamp was invited to present as part of a panel, “[Telehealth and Digital Therapeutics for Treatment of Alcohol Use Disorder during COVID-19](#)” hosted by Friends of NIAAA and the American Psychological Association on November 3, 2021. Dr. Huskamp presented on “Alcohol Telemedicine Consultation in Primary Care: Increasing Access to Pharmacotherapy and Specialty Treatment for Alcohol Problems.”

Dominic Hodgkin and Haiden Huskamp talk about benefit design and payor reimbursement for MOUD.

Drs. Hodgkin and Huskamp participated in [NIDA's webinar](#) on “Research Needed to Advance the Impact of Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD): Focus on Benefit Design and Payor Reimbursement Practices Virtual Meeting” on October 25, 2021. Panelists were asked to identify research and evidence gaps related to coverage, benefit design, reimbursement



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practices, and other payer practices related to reimbursement for medications used to treat opioid use disorder (MOUDs).

Richard Frank delivers Stanley Wallack Distinguished Memorial Lecture



On January 20, 2022, Dr. Richard Frank delivered the 6th annual [Stanley Wallack Distinguished Memorial Lecture](#). Dr. Frank, Margaret Morris Professor of Health Economics (emeritus) at Harvard Medical School and Senior Fellow in Economic Studies and Director of the Schaeffer Initiative on Health Policy at the Brookings Institution, gave a talk entitled "Prescription Drug Affordability and the Supply of Cures."

Congressional briefings on telehealth during and after the COVID-19 pandemic



Between August 2020 and March 2021, researchers on the Telemedicine Component Project briefed members of Congress five times. Drs. Lori Uscher-Pines and Ateev Mehrotra presented on telehealth for opioid use disorder during the COVID-19 pandemic, and later on what is needed for regulatory and payment processes to support continued telemedicine.



Haiden Huskamp and Dominic Hodgkin receive NIAAA grant to study prescriptions treatment trajectories for patients with alcohol use disorder



Center researchers Drs. Haiden Huskamp and Dominic Hodgkin received an R01 grant from NIAAA to study medications for alcohol use disorder. This study will use linked electronic health record data on medication orders and claims data and will identify unfilled prescriptions. This will allow more precise identification of when individuals fall off the path of AUD medication use, and the outcomes associated with different treatment trajectories.

Recent Center-funded pilot papers

The Center has hosted a program to fund pilot papers for graduate students and early-career investigators, to facilitate publishing papers on Center-related themes and provide the opportunity to receive mentoring from Center researchers. We highlight here several recently published papers by these excellent early career researchers.



Carrie Fry publishes paper on Medicaid waivers and access to behavioral health services in *Psychiatric Services*

Dr. Fry's pilot paper, "[Medicaid Waivers and Access to Behavioral Health Services: What Is Known and What Can Be Expected](#)," was recently published by *Psychiatric Services*. Dr. Fry examines how changes to Medicaid enrollment and policies have created barriers to treatment for substance use disorder and behavioral health care.

Other recent center-funded pilot papers include:

Robert Bohler, [Predictors of US states' adoption of naloxone access laws](#),

[2001-2017](#)

Shayna Mazel, [Virtual engagement in a social media community of mothers with substance use disorders: Content analysis](#)

Adrienne Sabety, [Opioid use in older adults and Medicare Part D](#)

Recent Center publications

For a more complete list of Center publications, please visit the [publications page](#) on our website.

[Financial sustainability of payment models for office-based opioid treatment in outpatient clinics](#)

[Initiating opioid use disorder medication via telemedicine during COVID-19: Implications for proposed reforms to the Ryan Haight Act](#)

[Treatment of opioid use disorder among commercially insured patients in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

[Telemedicine for treating mental health and substance use disorders: reflections since the pandemic](#)

[Effectiveness of value-based purchasing for substance use treatment engagement and retention](#)

[Use of telemedicine for opioid use disorder treatment – Perceptions and experiences of opioid use disorder clinicians](#)

[Emergency department–based efforts to offer medication treatment for opioid use disorder: What can we learn from current approaches?](#)