



COLLEGE OF SCIENCE & ENGINEERING

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Research and News Worth Repeating

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Substance Use/Opioids

Pandemic Recovery: COVID-19 and Substance Abuse Treatment

Dallas Magazine - September 24, 2020

Despite seeing over 860 clients between March and July this year and housing over 100 women and children on-campus at a time, Nexus Recovery Center was able to keep its entire campus entirely COVID-free due to increased safety measures and campus-wide testing.

Nexus Recovery Center's mission is to address high addiction rates across the country and provide care and support for women struggling with addiction in North Texas. "One-fourth of our clients report being homeless upon admission," says Nexus Recovery Center CEO Heather Ormand.

To mitigate the spread of COVID-19, the treatment facility employed isolation rooms across campus for symptomatic clients, contact tracing and admissions screening procedures, and various new virtual and socially-distanced activities to assist and engage clients through treatment.

<https://www.dmagazine.com/healthcare-business/2020/09/pandemic-recovery-covid-19-and-substance-abuse-treatment/>

Texas nurses with substance abuse disorders relapsing at higher rate since pandemic began

CBS Austin – September 22, 2020

The Texas Peer Assistance Program for Nurses (TPAPN) is a treatment program for nurses with mental illness or substance abuse disorders and can be an alternative to discipline to help nurses get back to work.

According to program director Dawn Webb, TPAPN serves about 1100 nurses statewide - at any one time they are typically handling 600 cases. Program requirements vary for each nurse depending on their individual needs and fitness for duty. "They may need treatments, counseling, medicine. Once they get stabilized then go back to employment," says Webb.

Follow-up drug screens are conducted from one to five years and the total number of positive drug tests has steadily increased since 2018. However, the most recent quarter, from March through May of this year, had the highest total number of positive tests since 2018 even though TPAPN conducted the least number of tests than previous quarters due to COVID-19 restrictions. Stress factors and job loss are blamed for the increase in relapse rates.

<https://cbsaustin.com/news/local/texas-nurses-with-substance-abuse-disorders-relapsing-at-higher-rates-since-pandemic-began>

Texas receives \$104 Million Federal Grant to Fight Opioid Epidemic

The Texan - September 29, 2020

In 2018, Texas saw 1,402 opioid-involved overdose deaths, and according to the American Enterprise Institute, the epidemic cost Texas about \$20,875,563. The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) recently received a two-year, \$104 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to help in the fight against opioids. In previous years, HHSC has received \$46.2 million in 2018 and \$24.1 million in 2019, which has been used as part of the Texas Targeted Opioid Response (TTOR) program established for implementing prevention, treatment, and recovery programs in the state. HHSC reports that more than 600,000 people received prevention, treatment or recovery support services through TTOR.

<https://thetexan.news/texas-receives-104-million-federal-grant-to-fight-opioid-epidemic/>

A mixed-method comparison of physician-reported beliefs about and barriers to treatment with medication for opioid use disorder

Substance Abuse Treatment, Prevention and Policy - September 14, 2020

Medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) such as buprenorphine, methadone, and extended-release naltrexone are the main line of defense against opioid use disorder. However, MOUD often is underutilized because of the lack of providers trained and willing to prescribe the medications. This study used mixed methods (focus groups and an online survey) to look at beliefs that U.S. physicians have about MOUD. Findings showed that physicians have higher perceptions of efficacy for methadone and buprenorphine than for naltrexone. In addition, physicians most commonly cited insurance obstacles such as prior authorization requirements as barriers to treatment. Regulatory barriers such as required trainings were not considered significant barriers. Additional education around comparative efficacy of MOUD was recommended as well as government regulations mandating full insurance coverage and prohibiting prior authorization requirements.

<https://substanceabusepolicy.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13011-020-00312-3>

Bridges to Sobriety: Testing the Feasibility and Acceptability of a Mobile App Designed to Supplement an Adolescent Substance Use Disorder Treatment Program

Clinical Social Work Journal - June 18, 2020

Mobile health apps are being used in a variety of ways to increase engagement for those with substance use disorders (SUD). This study explored the feasibility and acceptability of using a mobile application, Bridges to Sobriety, as a supplement to an adolescent substance use disorder treatment. An app was developed incorporating focus group input and included a toolbox with various psychoeducational tools and a games module containing derivatives of two popular smart phone games. Participants had to complete several of the psychoeducational tools before gaining access to the games module. Twelve adolescents from eastern Missouri interacted with Bridges to Sobriety during a pilot testing phase. Results showed that usage increased in the final three months of the trial and participants varied in their usage with very low use for some participants but frequent use by others. Barriers such as access to a smartphone and access to wi-fi were noted.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10615-020-00765-w>

Federal Funds Awarded to Nurse-led Project Combatting Opioid Crisis

Texas A&M Today - September 24, 2020

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP), awarded a \$500,000 grant to the Texas A&M College of Nursing to expand ongoing efforts in support of women, children and families in rural areas impacted by opioid use disorder.

This grant will help a nurse-led project team advance the Golden Crescent Children's Advocates for Recovery Equity (GC-CARE) initiative designed to reduce neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) in rural communities through a multi-faceted approach to improving access to quality care, family support systems and social determinants of health. The grant will support a three year effort to encourage prevention, offer quality care, support families in recovery from Substance Use Disorder (SUD) and will include establish strategic partnerships in target communities, increasing use of telehealth solutions and reducing stigma among people in recovery .

<https://today.tamu.edu/2020/09/24/federal-funds-awarded-to-nurse-led-project-combatting-opioid-crisis/>

Telemedicine

Telemedicine is Revolutionizing Prison Health Care

Elemental - January 3, 2020

The many demands of providing health care to people in prison has led prisons to often be on the cutting edge of the use of telemedicine. Difficulties and inefficiencies of bringing medical specialists to prisons, or bring people from prison to medical facilities have included security concerns and lengthy travel times. As a result, prisons have long used telemedicine to provide remote medical care, initially by phone calls but more recently using video chats with physicians. Using telehealth, specialists can see more patients and patients often have better outcomes with regular access to needed specialists. Dr. Bradley Erickson, an associate professor of urology at the University of Iowa, has been remotely providing health care to Iowa inmates for the past decade. Since setting up his system, he has been treating over 250 patients while previously with only in-person, they treated between 4 and 10 patients per year.

<https://elemental.medium.com/telemedicine-is-revolutionizing-prison-health-care-c82dacf35c74>

Avera to Use Telehealth to Connect Police, Mental Health Professionals

mHealth Intelligence - July 31, 2020

Avera Health is launching a telehealth platform to help give South Dakota law enforcement and court officers access to health professionals. "Partnering to find innovative solutions to reduce disparities in healthcare access in rural areas is a cornerstone of Avera eCARE's work," Avera eCARE CEO Deanna Larson said in the press release. "Across the US, there is a growing shortage of psychiatric workforce. At the same time, we see the need for behavioral health care recognized, resulting in an increasing number of requests for services." A \$1 million grant from the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable trust is being used to launch a pilot telehealth program in 23 counties in South Dakota using mHealth tablets to link officers with counselors to aid in assessing, de-escalating and stabilizing crisis situations. The connected health platforms can help improve care in rural areas and even reduce arrests.

<https://mhealthintelligence.com/news/avera-to-use-telehealth-to-connect-police-mental-health-professionals>

Telehealth enables health center to tackle rural and COVID-19 challenges

Healthcare IT - October 5, 2020

Since the beginning of COVID-19, Jordan Valley Community Center in Springfield, Missouri has been employing Zoom and video conferencing for patients with substance use disorder. They have had a 50-fold increase in telehealth visits in the 6 months from March to August 2020. Clinic-based telemedicine kiosks and approximately 700 home-based virtual care units that link into the existing electronic health record (EHR) system have been deployed using a \$740,000 award from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). They have been able to expand medication-assisted treatment (MAT) to rural areas as well as use telephone visits for issues such as behavioral health and diabetes management.

<https://www.healthcareitnews.com/news/telehealth-enables-health-center-tackle-rural-and-covid-19-challenges>