

GREATER SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA NODE QUARTERLY DIGEST



Introduction to the Greater Southern California Node



Welcome to the first issue of the Greater Southern California Node (GSCN) Quarterly Digest!

The purpose of the GSCN Quarterly Digest is to (1) connect with the community and local leaders, (2) provide late-breaking research on substance use, (3) disseminate evidence-based resources to providers, and (4) share expert clinical advice on substance use topics.

The overall objective of the GSCN is to advance the mission of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) by participating in and supporting research focused on treatment interventions for substance use disorders (SUDs), including opioid use disorder (OUD).

Toward that goal, the GSCN collaborates with other nodes of the NIDA Clinical Trials Network (CTN) and local partners to design and conduct research that explores innovative methods to increase utilization of evidence-based treatments for SUDs.

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Meet Our Principal Investigators & Partners

"Our goal for the quarterly digest is to promote interactions with other researchers, with clinicians, and with community members to share evidence-based SUD treatments that can be integrated into practice."

- Yih-Ing and Larissa



Yih-Ing Hser, Ph.D., Node Lead Investigator

Dr. Yih-Ing Hser is a Distinguished Research Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences at the UCLA Integrated Substance Abuse Programs and the former Director of the Center for Advancing Longitudinal Drug Abuse Research. As a trained quantitative psychologist, she has extensive experience in health services research, treatment evaluation, and long-term follow-up research, derived from her prior and ongoing research projects.



Larissa J. Mooney, M.D., Node Lead Investigator

Dr. Larissa Mooney is a board-certified addiction psychiatrist and Associate Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). She is the Director of the UCLA Addiction Psychiatry Clinic and Chief of the Greater Los Angeles Veterans Affairs Substance Use Disorders Section. Dr. Mooney has conducted research at UCLA Integrated Substance Abuse Programs on pharmacological and behavioral treatment interventions for addictive disorders.

To learn more about our investigators, partners, and current projects, visit the [GSCN website](#).



Hot Topics

1. Visit the [CA Opioid Dashboard](#) to review California Opioid Use data.
2. [Opioid Use Disorder in Women and Implications for Treatment](#)
3. [Integrating Telemedicine for Medication Treatment for OUD in Rural Primary Care Clinics: Beyond the COVID Pandemic](#)

Upcoming Workshop

Title: Disparities in SUD treatment among African Americans: A way forward for CTN Research

Date: March 3-4, 2021

Time: 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Eastern

Registration: [Zoom Registration Link](#)

Nora's Blog



Visit [Nora Volkow's blog](#) (Director of NIDA) for highlights about work being done through NIDA, and other news about substance use

CTN Dissemination Library



Visit the [Clinical Trials Network Library](#) for SUD resources, research findings, and other materials.

COVID-19 and the Opioid Crisis

While the COVID-19 pandemic grasps the main headlines the opioid crisis continued to impact our communities.

- [A recent study in JAMA](#) found that overdose-related cardiac arrest seen by emergency medical services during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly doubled from the previous year. These increases are hypothesized to be associated with high levels of social isolation brought on by the pandemic.
- [A report released by the Center of Diseases Control and Prevention](#) found the western states in the U.S are experiencing the largest percentage increase of accidental death by synthetic opioids. This increase is consistent with greater availability of illicit fentanyl, as indicated by increases in fentanyl positivity in toxicology tests. The CDC report outlines recommendations to respond to this crisis.

Ask an Expert: COVID-19 and Recovery Support



Brian Hurley, MD, MBA, DFASAM, is an addiction physician and Director of Addiction Medicine for the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services. He will assume the position of President-Elect for the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) in April 2021 and serves as a volunteer faculty in the UCLA Department of Family Medicine.

Question: As an addiction psychiatrist working within a large public healthcare system, what are the most pressing issues you are addressing right now?

Answer: The COVID-19 pandemic, which is causing a worldwide maelstrom of stress, has been a catastrophic driver of increased substance use and addiction. It also disrupted the usual pathways by which people access treatment and maintain recovery. While the pandemic has prompted critical policy changes that facilitate telehealth and telephone delivery of treatment to patients, the net effect of the pandemic has been increased substance-related morbidity and mortality in the U.S.

Question: How is COVID-19 affecting the patients you see?

Answer: The patients I see are increasingly burdened by the stress from COVID-19 driven by social isolation, infection avoidance, anxiety, grief and loss, and loss of economic opportunity. COVID-19 has limited access to in-person medical and behavioral health treatment and expanded access to virtual modalities of treatment and mutual self-help. For patients who are comfortable with virtual modalities, COVID-19 has been a wonderful opportunity, but for patients more reliant on in-person social connectivity, the physical distancing requirements have been devastating.

[Continue reading the interview with Dr. Hurley.](#)

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK

If you have clinical questions, topics for Ask an Expert, or want to share ideas for future research and clinical collaboration, contact us at mcurtis@mednet.ucla.edu.