

Opioid-Related News and the Courts

Weekly Review

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National

[Q&A: Opioid epidemic: 'We cannot arrest our way out of this'](#)

Healio

The American Association for the Treatment of Opioid Dependence [AATOD] held its annual conference in Baltimore, from Oct. 30, through Nov. 3.

Healio spoke to AATOD President Mark Parrino, MPA, to gain insight on the events of the conference as well as the major issues facing clinicians on the front lines of OUD treatment.

Healio: What are your thoughts on the milestone of 100,000 deaths in the U.S. attributed to accidental drug overdoses?

Parrino: Passing the milestone of 100,000 deaths has been tragic and frightening. Clearly, the driving force has been fentanyl, which accounts for over 60% of these deaths. It has certainly motivated the current administration and Congress to do what they can to bring these numbers down. Some of the proposals are good in expanding access to comprehensive treatment for opioid use disorder while others are a bit dangerous, including giving doctors outside of the scope of [Opioid Treatment Programs] the ability to prescribe methadone.

Michigan

[Drug Court Series: It can be said this is where drug court truly begins](#)

Pontiac Daily Leader

Drug court clients have to start their journey to recovery somewhere, and that somewhere is getting arrested. This brings law enforcement into the picture. The true beginning to drug court graduation is being arrested.

“I guess this is the gateway,” said Jim Woolford. Woolford was chief of police in Pontiac until just a few months ago when he became city administrator. He served on the drug court team from its inception in 2017 until he had to step down when he changed jobs. Current Pontiac Police Chief Dan Davis has taken his place on the team.

A drug court of sorts began more than a decade ago and the team was limited. The police were not part of it. The current drug court setup came about in 2017 behind the drive of a determined member of the Probation Department.

“Heidi Zeidenstein from probation had been working toward a drug court program and getting certified and part of that process was to partner up,” Woolford said. “She came to us and asked if we wanted to be a part of it.

North Carolina

[Beth Macy’s “Raising Lazarus” highlights those on the front lines of harm reduction](#)

WFDD

Interview Highlights

On what the treatment landscape looks like:

Basically, we have an 87% treatment gap, which means that only 13% of people have been able to access any treatment at all in the last year. Now we know that buprenorphine and methadone are the gold standard of care for people with opioid use disorder. But because addiction was always kind of a stepchild, not held within our healthcare system, because we don’t have universal healthcare ... Many rehabs, in fact, most rehabs still don’t allow people to be on MAT, medication-assisted treatment, which is buprenorphine or methadone. Most drug courts don’t allow participants to be on MAT. Most jails and prisons, which have been our country’s de facto response to addiction, don’t allow inmates to be on MAT. And so most hospitals, when somebody shows up for an overdose, or an abscess, or some other injection-related disease, don’t have a way to put people on MAT. These are all the places where we could be touching this huge group of American citizens who are suffering from this treatable medical condition, but we’re just simply not doing it.

Ohio

[Court is certified as drug recovery docket](#)

Ironton Tribune

The Second Chance Drug Court Recovery program of the Ironton Municipal Court has earned its final certification from the Ohio Supreme Court’s commission on specialized dockets.

Specialized dockets are courts that are dedicated to specific types of crimes or offenders and it uses a combination of techniques for both holding offenders accountable and addressing the underlying causes of their behaviors.

Those who are considered for the docket are low-level offenders with no history of violence.

Ohio Supreme Court Chief Justice Maureen O’Connor congratulated both Judge Kevin Waldo and the Ironton Municipal Court for getting the final certification.

“Specialized dockets divert offenders toward criminal justice initiatives that employ tools and tailored services to treat and rehabilitate the offender so they can become productive members of society,” she said. “Studies have shown this approach works by reducing recidivism while saving tax dollars.”

Texas

[To America’s Permissive Addiction ‘Fix,’ Critics Just Say No](#)

Longview News-Journal

It’s a common refrain from recovered addicts: many believe they never could have gotten clean without the forced respite from drug use of a jail sentence.

Achieving that benefit doesn’t necessarily require jail, however. The purpose of drug courts is to impose drug treatment by force on those unwilling or incapable of seeking it, but without having to resort to the brute force of the criminal justice system.

That too, however, is met with staunch opposition from harm reduction advocates, who often claim that involuntary treatment simply “doesn’t work.” Szalavitz, for instance, wrote a New York Times op-ed earlier this year titled [“Why Forced Addiction Treatment Fails.”](#)

The [research](#), however, paints a muddier picture. Dr. John Kelly, the Harvard psychiatrist, has [investigated](#) the question of involuntary versus voluntary treatment. “When people are involuntarily committed, they don’t do worse,” he said. “They do as well.”