

# ALLIANCE NEWS



Alliance for Better Communities

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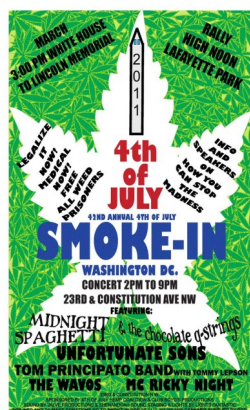
## SURPRISING TRENDS IN MARIJUANA USE, NEW SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENTS, AND EMERGING VAPING RELATED HEALTH RISKS

By: Martin J. Rothschild, J.D.

As legalization of marijuana looms on the horizon in New York, there is increasing concern that there will be a dramatic increase in



cannabis-use-disorder among frequent users. However, a study conducted by Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health found that the prevalence of cannabis-use-disorder as defined in the DSM (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*) actually decreased among frequent users between 2002 and 2016. Among people reporting



daily or almost daily use across all age groups the disorder declined significantly-by 27 percent in adolescents, by 30 percent in ages 18-25, and by 37.5 percent for those 26 and older. However, it would be dangerous to read into these results the conclusion that frequent use is risk free. The study also determined that for all age groups, there was

no reduction in the prevalence of multiple health problems associated with the drug, including other psychiatric disorders, and respiratory, digestive, cardiovascular and infectious disease problems.<sup>1</sup>

**Vision:** To have a community that is fully committed to the health and safety of its residents.

**Mission:** To reduce underage drinking and substance abuse and expeditiously address any emerging threats.



In the treatment field, the NIH is awarding grants to form a Justice Community Opioid Innovation Network (JCOIN) to develop plans and programs to treat opioid use disorder (OUD) in prisons and criminal justice settings. NIDA director Nora D. Volkow has said: ***“It is vitally important to provide evidence-based approaches for people leaving criminal justice facilities in order to prevent relapse and opioid overdose which often occurs as they transition back into their communities.”*** The proposed grants will be directed to evidence based medications, behavioral interventions, digital therapeutics and patient-centered treatment modalities.<sup>2</sup>



A disturbing new problem has emerged in the vaping crisis referred to as *“spill-over.”* The Consumer Product Safety Commission issued a notice in February that flavored vape juice containers must not only be equipped with child-resistant caps, they must be designed to significantly limit how much juice can spill out of an open bottle. A vial of the juice is said to contain enough poison to kill four toddlers. Nonetheless, candy and fruit flavored juices are being sold nationwide without adequate flow restrictors, and in some cases, with no restrictors at all. As early as 2014, the Centers for Disease Control issued a warning about an increasing number of reports to poison centers concerning children being exposed to e-cigarettes and their dangerous contents. An incident occurred that year in upstate New York when an infant ingested the contents of an open liquid nicotine bottle. He convulsed and vomited blood, his eyes rolled back in his head, and he was purple when the ambulance arrived.



Researchers studying the problem have advocated for a recall of all vaping products which do not adequately prevent spill-over or access to nicotine and other ingredients, but it has not occurred. U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal, Democrat from Connecticut, and the Republican chair of the Senate subcommittee overseeing the Consumer Product Safety Commission demanded that liquid vaping containers without flow restrictors be removed from stores. ***“This lapse of enforcement is severe and serious and has left countless children at risk”***, Blumenthal stated this fall.<sup>3</sup>

## STATEWIDE AND NATIONAL NEWS OF IMPORTANCE

### SECOND VAPING DEATH REPORTED IN NEW YORK

The State Health Department announced that the state's second person to die as a result of vaping related lung illness is a man in his 30s.



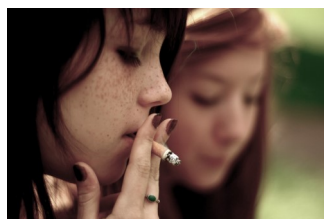
Governor Cuomo stated in a press release: ***“If you don’t know what***

***you’re smoking, don’t smoke it.”***

There have been 165 reported cases of vaping related illnesses in New York, and 2000 reported cases nationwide including 39 deaths.<sup>4</sup>

### LEGAL AGE TO PURCHASE TOBACCO RAISED TO 21 IN NEW YORK

The minimum age to buy tobacco and electronic ciga-



rettes has been raised from 18 years old to 21. The goal is to prevent young people from easily getting nicotine and vaping products which have been proven addictive and dangerous. The New York State Department of Health reports that nearly 40 per cent of 12th graders, and 27 per cent of high school students are now using flavored vaping products.<sup>6</sup>

### BIDEN REJECTS PLAN FOR NATIONWIDE LEGALIZATION OF MARIJUANA

While Democratic presidential candidate, and former Vice President, Joe Biden supports le-



galization of medical marijuana, he is the lone democratic candidate reserving judgement about legalization of recreational use of the drug. He recently stated: ***“I need more data to make that judgment.”*** He clarified, however, that he supports decriminalization and asserted: ***“No one should go to jail for it, period.”***<sup>5</sup>

### HOSPITALS CHANGING APPROACH TO USE OF OPIOIDS AND ABUSE TREATMENT

Major medical facilities including the Mayo Clinic are implementing new prescription guidelines and treatment modalities to deal with the opioid crisis. Drug treatment is being integrated into general medical practices. Greater monitoring of patients on opioid therapy is being instituted, and alternative treatments are being utilized. Social factors are now a major consideration when prescribing opioids and in treating abuse.<sup>7</sup>

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*HAPPY HOLIDAYS!*



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## NORTH COUNTRY OVERDOSE DEATHS INCREASE

Alliance chairman and Public Health official Stephen Jennings has expressed dismay



that drug overdose deaths have increased in Jefferson County over the last 2 months. There have been 10 possible overdose deaths in the County over that time period, likely due to fentanyl. Mr. Jennings stated: ***“I was surprised and saddened ...One case is too many. This many is far too many.”*** Unfortunately, when someone dies of an overdose, others want the drug that caused it, because they crave the greater high it potentially creates.<sup>8</sup>