

## SUICIDE, SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND COVID-19

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States have initiated phased re-openings in an attempt to stimulate an anemic economy, but the Coronavirus has not disappeared. Nearly 40 million Americans have filed unemployment claims, and econo-

mists predict that many of their former jobs will be lost forever with employers downsizing and reducing operating costs. The stress and depression caused by this and other escalating problems has resulted in an increased risk and occurrence of suicide and drug abuse.



The Coronavirus (Covid-19) has claimed over 100,000 lives and the number of fatalities continues to rise. However, there is another largely unrecognized and equally dangerous phenomenon of suicide and fatal drug and alcohol abuse resulting from unemployment, fear, dread and isolation. These occurrences have been labeled “deaths of despair” by an organization known as The Well Being Trust. The organization is a national foundation launched by Providence St. Joseph Health in 2016 as an independent 501(c)(3) public charity. It conducted a study which showed that with a rapid recovery, the COVID-19 pandemic would lead to nearly 28,000 “deaths of despair”. On the other hand, the study estimates that a slow recovery with high unemployment could result in more than 150,000 such deaths. Somewhere in the middle, about 75,000 additional deaths, is most likely according to the researchers.<sup>1</sup>

Governor Cuomo has determined that the Covid-19 crisis has lead to a mental health



crisis. He recently stated: *"Don't underestimate the trauma that this has created for people". It has been incredibly anxiety producing, traumatic, disturbing and we've felt and seen all along evidence that this is creating a significant mental health challenge for people.*" The state has created a Mental Health Coalition to deal with the problem. It started a website [www.howareyoureally.org.](http://www.howareyoureally.org.), there is an emotional support hotline 1-844-863-9314, and additional mental health services are also available at that number.<sup>2</sup>

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Alliance Chairman and County Health Commissioner Stephen Jennings reports that Jefferson county is on track to have the highest number of drug overdoses it has ever had, with a projected number of at least 33 overdose deaths by the end of the year. Most of the recently increased overdoses occurred in May as the isolation and stress of the Coronavirus shut-down reached its peak. However, it hasn't been determined how many of the overdose deaths have been suicides.<sup>3</sup> In the nation overall, it has been found that accidental overdose deaths have actually decreased to some extent as "deaths of despair" have increased. Suicide deaths are highest among males, and all minority groups show a higher suicide rate than white Americans.<sup>4</sup> This increased rate is likely due to the fact that Blacks and Latinos have substantially lower access to mental health and substance-use treatment services. They often terminate treatment prematurely, and often experience less culturally responsive care.<sup>5</sup>

Job loss creates one of the greatest suicide risks. Despite the gradual reopenings across the country, many employers are cutting their work forces permanently. According to mental health experts in a JAMA report, sustained economic stress from job losses will likely be associated with higher U.S. suicide rates. The analysis was published in the April 10, 2020 edition of JAMA Psychiatry. Loss of one's livelihood creates heightened feelings of loneliness and isolation which are associated with suicidal thoughts according to the report. Because suicide rates tend to peak in the late spring and summer in the Northern Hemisphere, these time periods are particularly dangerous, since they coincide with the current surge in Covid-19 cases and prevention efforts. Dr. Mark Reger, lead researcher for the JAMA article, stated that the current pandemic situation creates the *"perfect storm"* for an increased risk of suicide for many people.<sup>6</sup>



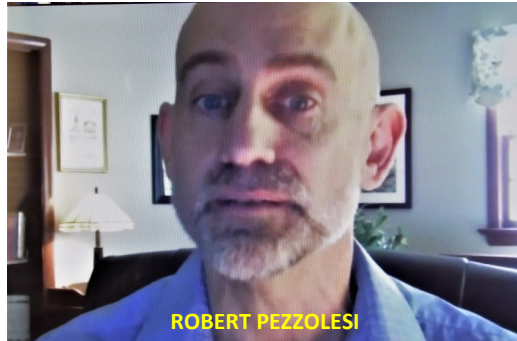


# PANDEMIC KEEPS MAY ALLIANCE MEETING ZOOMED

ROBERT PEZZOLESI, MPH, LECTURES ON IMPACT OF PANEDMIC AND STATE RULES ON ALCOHOL ABUSE

## Treatment Needs in Pandemic

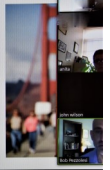
- Large increase in alcohol-only admissions
- Increase in admissions for sedatives/hypnotics (benzodiazepines, Ambien, etc.)



ROBERT PEZZOLESI

## 6. Alcohol is a depressant which can act as an acute trigger for suicide

- WHO has determined alcohol is a causal factor for unipolar depression [WHO, 2004]
- About one-quarter to one-third of all completed suicides are alcohol-related, with alcohol functioning as a "lubricant to suicidality." [Ali, et al., 2013; Kaplan, et al., 2013]
- CDC recommends community-based alcohol policies as one way to reduce suicide risk [CDC, 2017]



## SOME OF THE 40 ATTENEDEES:



REVEREND (RABBI) SMITH



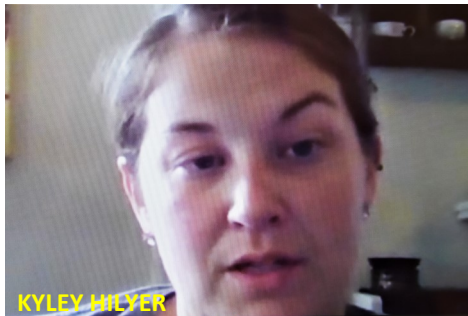
DEANA NELSON, ASST. ATTORNEY GENERAL



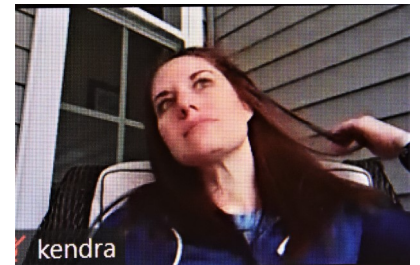
TIM RITTEN



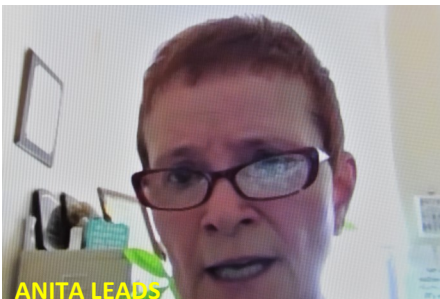
RALPH WYLIE



KYLEE HILFER



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ANITA LEADS



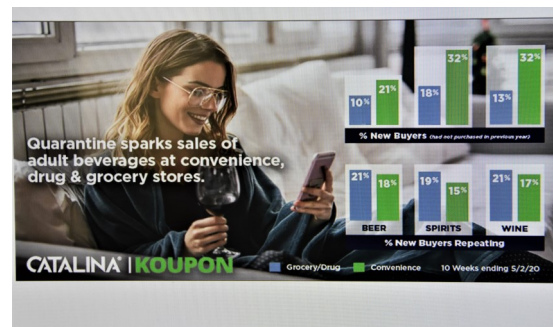
CHAIRMAN JENNINGS



ROBERT BOUEN



KAY SMILIE



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4. Sullivan, K., *nbcnews.com*, Drug overdose deaths drop in U.S. as other deaths of despair rise, report finds, May 2020, retrieved from: [https://www.amazon.com/amazonprime?\\_encoding=UTF8&%2AVersion%2A=1&%2Aentries%2A=0](https://www.amazon.com/amazonprime?_encoding=UTF8&%2AVersion%2A=1&%2Aentries%2A=0)

5. SAMHSA, Double Jeopardy: COVID-19 and Behavioral Health Disparities for Black and Latino Communities in the U.S., May 2020, retrieved from: <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/covid19-behavioral-health-disparities-black-latino-communities.pdf>

6. Reger, M., Stanley, I, Joiner, T., *JAMA Psychiatry*, Suicide Mortality and Coronavirus Disease 2019- A perfect Storm?, April 2020, retrieved from: <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/fullarticle/2764584>

**NY'S NEW VAPE FLAVOR BAN ATTACKS PUBLIC HEALTH AMID PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS.** <https://filtermag.org/new-york-vaping-ban-flavors/>

**On April 3, at 3:38 am, the New York State Assembly passed a budget that includes a ban on the sale of vapor products in flavors other than tobacco. The ban was passed with no public debate; the State Capitol has been on lockdown for weeks because of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

**Governor Cuomo hates vaping and has made it his personal project to pass a flavor ban. Last fall, he directed the state health department to impose an emergency ban of flavored vaping products. He finally got the opportunity to pass a flavor ban as part of the state's budget, amid an unprecedented public health crisis.**

**The flavor ban will take effect 45 days after the governor signed it, on May 18. The other parts of the law are effective July 1.**

## Contact Us

Give us a call for more information

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**PURDUE PHARMA L.P. BANKRUPTCY** <https://www.purduepharmaclaims.com/?>

On September 15, 2019 and September 16, 2019, Purdue Pharma L.P., a U.S. limited partnership, its general partner and its subsidiaries, including Imbrium Therapeutics L.P., Adlon Therapeutics L.P., Greenfield BioVentures L.P., Avrio Health L.P., Rhodes Technologies, and Rhodes Pharmaceuticals L.P. (collectively, “Purdue” or “Debtors”) each filed for bankruptcy under chapter 11 of the United States Bankruptcy Code in the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of New York. The cases are pending before the Honorable Robert D. Drain and are jointly administered under Case No. 19-23649. If you (or, in the case of a (a) wrongful-death claim, the estate you represent, or (b) claim on behalf of a minor or a baby, the minor or baby that you are the parent or guardian for) believe you have been injured by Purdue, or Purdue prescription opioids, like OxyContin® or other prescription opioids produced, marketed or sold by Purdue, you can file a claim for compensation. **The Bankruptcy Court has set June 30, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. (Prevailing Eastern Time) (the “Bar Date”) as the deadline for each person, entity, governmental unit and Native American Tribe to file Proofs of Claim for claims that arose from an action taken by the Debtors prior to September 15, 2019.**