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ASPPH Policy & Advocacy

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National Academies' Panel Calls for Ending Barriers to MAT Access

Related Research Needs Outlined

The National Academies last week issued a new report, "Medications for Opioid Use Disorder Save Lives" ([press release](#), [report](#), [highlights](#)). The report says that three FDA-approved medications to treat opioid use disorder (OUD) are safe and effective, but that most people who could benefit from these treatments do not receive them and access is inequitable, especially among certain subpopulations. The report says that major barriers to the use of medications to treat opioid use disorder include:

- Misunderstanding and stigma toward drug addiction, individuals with OUD, and the medications to treat it.

- Inadequate education and training of the professionals responsible for working with people with OUD, including treatment providers and law enforcement and other criminal justice personnel.
- Current regulations around methadone and buprenorphine, such as waiver policies, patient limits, restrictions on treatment settings, and other policies that are not supported by evidence or employed for other medical disorders.
- The fragmented system of care for people with OUD and current financing and payment policies.

The National Academies' panel, which was chaired by Alan Leshner, the former director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse and former head of AAAS, concluded that more research "is needed to define the best treatment regimen for each of the available medications and to directly compare the effects of the three medications' long-term use. Research should focus on developing new and better medications to treat OUD, on determining the most effective behavioral therapies to be used with medications, and on refining the most appropriate protocols for their effective use. Despite the need for more research, evidence gathered over the past 50 years underscores the benefits of long-term retention on OUD medication." The panel also concluded, "Curbing the epidemic will require an 'all hands on deck' strategy—involving health care, criminal justice, patients and family members, and beyond—because no one group alone will be able to resolve the crisis. Making access to medications for OUD much broader and more equitable is a high priority for making meaningful progress in addressing the opioid crisis and saving lives of those with OUD."

Trump Executive Order on Campus Free Speech Expected to Have No Practical Impact

Orders Dept. of Education to Expand "College Scorecard" to Graduate and Professional Schools

Donald Trump on March 21 signed an [Executive Order](#) on Improving Free Inquiry, Transparency, and Accountability at Colleges and Universities." The order directs various cabinet departments and agencies to "take appropriate steps, in a manner consistent with applicable law, including the First Amendment, to ensure institutions that receive Federal research or education grants [excluding student aid] promote free inquiry."

In a [press statement](#), Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee Chair Lamar Alexander (R-TN) said, "I don't want to see Congress or the president or the

department of anything creating speech codes to define what you can say on campus. The US Constitution guarantees free speech. Federal courts define and enforce it. The Department of Justice can weigh in. Conservatives don't like it when judges try to write laws, and conservatives should not like it when legislators and agencies try to rewrite the Constitution."

The Executive Order also focuses on increasing transparency in student loan programs and directs the Department of Education to expand the [College Scorecard](#) to graduate and professional programs. The White House also issued a related [fact sheet](#) on the Executive Order.

During the White House signing ceremony, Trump [said](#), "Under the guise of 'speech codes' and 'safe spaces' and 'trigger warnings,' these universities have tried to restrict free thought, impose total conformity, and shut down the voices of great young Americans like those here today. These are great people. All of that changes starting right now. We're dealing with billions and billions and billions of dollars. Taxpayer dollars should not subsidize anti-First Amendment institutions. And that's exactly what they are: anti-First Amendment. Universities that want taxpayer dollars should promote free speech, not silence free speech. Today's groundbreaking action is the first in a series of steps we will take to defend students' rights."

An [article](#) posted by *The New Yorker* on Friday explored, "Trump's Free-Speech Executive Order and the Right's Fixation on Campus Politics." Mary Sue Coleman, president of the American Association of Universities, issued a [statement](#) on the order saying that , "... this executive order is a solution in search of a problem. The free and open exchange of ideas and information is already a fundamental cornerstone of the educational mission of America's leading research universities, and our institutions are fully committed to the protection and preservation of this proud heritage of debate and discussion. Open and robust debate are the bedrock of the scientific and societal advancement, and at the very core of our values."

ASPPH Communicates Program Support to Congressional Leaders

ASPPH has submitted comments to several Congressional committees this month on various issues and program requests. A running list of ASPPH [Advocacy Activities](#) is available on-line. The March comment letters include:

- March 22: ASPPH and its partners in the Health Air Coalition [wrote](#) to the leaders of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees urging them to increase funding for the CDC's Climate and Health Program to \$15 million. The groups said that the funding is critical for helping state and local health departments prepare and protect their communities from the health impacts of climate change that they are already experiencing.
- March 22: ASPPH joined dozens of other organizations in [writing](#) Congressional leaders urging them to advance the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness & Advancing Innovation Act (PAHPAI, H.R. 269), which overwhelmingly passed the House of Representatives in January. A similar version passed the Senate Health Education, Labor & Pensions (HELP) Committee last year. The groups suggested that the PAHPA be added to the disaster relief package being considered by Congress.
- March 20: The member organizations of the Federation of Associations of Schools of the Health Professions (FASHP) [wrote](#) to all Members of Congress congratulating them on their election to the 116th Congress and inviting them to utilize FASHP as a resource if they have any questions about health profession education and training. ASPPH is a member of FASHP and joined in signing the letter.
- March 18: ASPPH and dozens of other organizations [wrote](#) to Congressional leaders urging them to include in the FY 2020 appropriations bill for CDC \$58 million to address the infectious diseases impacts of the opioid epidemic. This initiative was authorized by the Substance Use Disorder Prevention that Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment for Patients and Communities (SUPPORT) Act. The groups also asked for report language to make clear that this funding should be used to support surveillance, prevention services, detection and linkages to care for the scope of infectious diseases associated with injection drug use, such as viral hepatitis, HIV, and infective endocarditis.
- March 14: ASPPH and more than 50 other organizations [wrote](#) to key agriculture appropriations subcommittee members in both the House and Senate urging them to approve the authorized level of user fees for the FDA to oversee tobacco products. The groups said that the user fees will give FDA the resources

it needs to protect kids and reduce the serious health and economic harms that tobacco products cause.

- March 14: ASPPH and more than 50 other organizations [wrote](#) to key Labor-HHS appropriators in both the House and Senate urging them to increase funding for the CDC's Office on Smoking and Health (OSH) by \$100 million, for a total of \$310 million. The organizations said this increase is needed to respond to soaring e-cigarette usage rates among youth and the devastating toll that tobacco continues to take on our nation's health.
- March 8: ASPPH and five other members of the Healthy Air coalition sent a [letter](#) to EPA formally requesting that the Agency EPA extend the comment deadline for at least 120 additional days on the Proposed Revised Supplemental Finding and Residual Risk and Technology Review for the Mercury and Air Toxics Standards. The organizations further requested that the EPA hold at least three additional public hearings on the proposal.
- March 7: ASPPH and more than 300 other members of the Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research, endorsed the Group's FY 2020 [recommendation](#) of an appropriation of at least \$41.6 billion for the NIH, a \$2.5 billion increase over the NIH's program level funding in FY 2019.
- March 7: ASPPH and 151 other members of the Friends of AHRQ [wrote](#) to Congressional appropriators requesting \$460 million in budget authority for the Agency for Health Research and Quality, which is consistent with the FY 2010 enacted level adjusted for inflation.
- March 7: ASPPH endorsed the [recommendation](#) of the Friends of the Title V Maternal and Child Health Services Program, which requested at least \$698 million for the Title V Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Services Block Grant program in the FY 2020 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education & Related Agencies Appropriations bill.
- March 4: ASPPH and 225 other members of the CDC Coalition [wrote](#) to Congressional appropriators urge them to provide at least \$7.8 billion for the CDC's programs in the FY 2020 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.
- March 4: ASPPH and other groups [wrote](#) to the Congressional sponsors of the Climate Change Health Protection and Promotion Act (S. 523/H.R. 1243) thanking them for their ongoing leadership and endorsing the legislation.

Federal Agency News:

- **Trump Again Calls for NIH Salary Limitations:** In budget [documents](#) released last week, the Trump administration is again proposing to lower the current HHS salary cap from Executive Level II (\$189,600 in 2019) to Executive Level V (\$154,300). The administration made a similar request in its FY 2018 and 2019 budget proposals. The NIH's budget proposal also again proposes a complementary "administrative policy" to "reduce the direct cost of research by capping the percentage of an investigator's salary that can be paid with NIH grant funds at 90 percent." This policy proposal also was made in the administration's FY 2019 request, which Congress rejected. NIH on Monday also [updated projections](#) for the Biomedical Research and Development Index (BRDPI), expecting the BRDPI to grow at 2.7% for FY 2019 through FY 2024.
- **Administration Proposes Cuts in Global Health:** Our colleagues at the Global Health Council provided the following [summary](#) of the Trump administration's FY 2020 funding request for global health accounts: "The request for Global Health programs at USAID and the State Department is \$6.34 billion, a \$2.5 billion (28%) reduction over FY 2019 levels. Almost all of the global health programs receive significant reductions, including PEPFAR (29%), Maternal and Child Health (26%), Tuberculosis (14%), Neglected Tropical Diseases (27%), Nutrition (46%), Family Planning (55%), and Malaria (11%). Funding for Vulnerable Children is eliminated. US contributions to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance and The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria are reduced, to \$250 million and \$1.1 billion respectively. Additionally, global health programs at CDC and NIH did not fare better, with cuts proposed for CDC's Center of Global Health and National Center for Emerging Zoonotic and Infectious Diseases and NIH's Fogarty Center and National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases."
- **Trump Administration Issues HEA Reauthorization Principles:** The administration last Monday released its [principles](#) for Higher Education Act (HEA) reform. The principles include simplifying student loan repayment, expanding the Pell grant program, and improving student outcome transparency. The administration also will encourage "responsible borrowing" for student loans and call on Congress to "reinstitute limits" on federal PLUS loans for parents and students. The White House said that Ivanka Trump is spearheading the plan, rather than the Department of Education and its secretary Betsy DeVos. The administration said its goal is to "modernize our higher education system to make it affordable, flexible and outcome-oriented so all Americans young and old can

learn the skills they need to secure and retain good paying jobs." The House and Senate committees with jurisdiction over the Higher Education Act have recently started holding hearings aimed at generating an HEA reauthorization bill. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), ranking Democrat on the Senate HELP Committee, [said](#), "The White House's proposal is a feeble attempt to claim the Trump Administration is helping students by identifying one symptom of rising student debt, while completely ignoring the root cause — that college costs are rising exponentially and most students can't afford college without taking on massive amounts of debt."

- **New Trans-NIH Strategic Plan for Women's Health Research:** The NIH Office of Research on Women's Health recently [published](#) "Advancing Science for the Health of Women: The 2019-2023 Trans-NIH Strategic Plan for Women's Health Research." The plan provides a framework for coordinating NIH efforts to advance science for the health of women while keeping pace with rapid changes in science and technology, evolving public health needs and legislative mandates.
- **NLM Seeks Grant Applications on Research to Reduce or Mitigate Health Data Set Errors and Gaps:** The NIH's National Library of Medicine issued a [notice](#) last week "...to highlight its interest in receiving grant applications through NLM Research Grants in Biomedical Informatics and Data Science (R01 Clinical Trial Optional) ([PAR 18-896](#)), focused on research to reduce or mitigate gaps and errors in health data sets."
- **CDC Leadership News:** Dr. Nancy Messonnier has been named the acting director of the CDC's Center for Preparedness and Response (CPR). Stephen C. Redd, MD, RADM, had been serving the dual role as CPR Director and as CDC Deputy Director for Public Health Service and Implementation Science for the last year. Dr. Messonnier's appointment is effective April 1.
- **The Targeting of Chinese Scholars and Students:** A [letter](#) published in Friday's issue of *Science* from members of the Society of Chinese Bioscientists in America (SCBA), the Chinese American Hematologist and Oncologist Network (CAHON), and the Chinese Biological Investigators Society (CBIS), expresses concerns "about the recent political rhetoric and policies that single out students and scholars of Chinese descent working in the United States as threats to US national interests." In a [response](#), various NIH leaders said, "We are determined to maintain the integrity of the NIH research enterprise, but we are also deeply concerned about the issues raised by these three societies. NIH is committed to avoiding overreaction, stigmatization, harassment, and profiling. We will use our

influence and bully pulpit as necessary to speak out against such prejudicial actions, for which there is no place in the biomedical research community.”

- **Addressing the E-Cigarette Craze:** In an op-ed [essay](#) in the *Washington Post* last week, Alex M. Azar, the Secretary of HHS, and Scott Gottlieb, the outgoing FDA commissioner, wrote, “The e-cigarette craze among teenagers has become an epidemic. We agree with those who believe that e-cigarettes may offer a lower-risk alternative for adult smokers who still want access to nicotine. But the continued availability of this opportunity to adults is being endangered by the e-cigarette industry’s slowness to address the dangers its products pose to teens.” The pair concluded their essay, “Absent a reversal in the trends of youth e-cigarette use, we envision a world where the FDA will continue to narrow the off-ramp for adults seeking a less harmful alternative to combustible cigarettes, in order to close the on-ramp that has resulted in the widespread and increasingly frequent use of e-cigarettes by teens. What happens in 2019 will go a long way to determine the future availability of these products.”
- **H-1B Visa Rules Changed; Benefits Those with Master’s Degrees or Higher:** The US Citizenship and Immigration Services on Tuesday provided [details](#) about changes in the allotment of H-1B visas for specialized foreign workers. On April 1, the agency will begin accepting applications for the 85,000 visas available in fiscal year 2020. The total includes 65,000 standard H-1B visas and 20,000 visas set aside for workers with U.S. master’s degrees or higher. Under a regulatory change announced in January, USCIS will first funnel all applicants — including those with advanced degrees — into the general pool of 65,000 visas. If applicants with U.S. master’s degrees or higher remain, they will enter processing for the 20,000 advanced degree visas. The agency estimates that the change will lead to a 16 percent increase in H-1B visa holders with U.S. master’s degrees or higher.
- **Data on HIV Transmission:** CDC released a [new issue](#) of *Vital Signs* on HIV transmission in the United States at each stage of HIV care. The results provide powerful evidence that increasing the number of people with HIV who are in care and virally suppressed is key to eliminating new HIV infections. According to this report, 80% of new HIV infections in 2016 were transmitted by people who did not know they had the virus or knew but were not in HIV care.
- **Measles and International Air Travel:** The *New York Times* [reported](#) on Sunday that “Last year, 82 of the 349 people diagnosed with measles carried them into this country from elsewhere, the highest number of imported cases since the virus was declared eliminated from the United States in 2000, the CDC said.” As a result, “A record 81 [aircraft] flights were investigated in 2018 for carrying at least

one person contagious with the disease, up from 15 investigations in 2017 and 10 in 2016, according to the C.D.C. Of the 106 aircraft, 66 were on domestic routes and the rest were inbound from foreign airports.” An [article](#) in Sunday’s *Washington Post* reported on a new study, described as “...the first systematic analysis of how anti-vaccine activist coordinate a harmful social media campaign...” The source [study](#) was published in *Vaccine* and authored by a team from the University of Pittsburgh.

- **Prevention Research Center Network Awardees Announced:** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has announced the Prevention Research Center (PRC) [awardees for 2019 to 2024](#). This cohort of PRC network includes 25 awardees that will receive funding to conduct applied public health prevention research.

In Brief

- **Health Leaders Must Offer A Positive and Internationalist Vision for Human Societies:** Richard Horton, the editor of *Lancet*, has posted an [essay](#) “Public health and the fight against extremism.” Tied to the recent New Zealand shooting, Dr. Horton writes that “The health professions have an important part to play in defeating the views that foster far-right hate speech and violence.” Citing Paul Morland’s recently [published](#), “The Human Tide: How Population Shaped the Modern World,” which shows how demography has influenced shifts in political power, Dr. Horton writes, “Morland shows that these shifts in demography are not a threat. They are the predictable evolution of human populations. Health workers have a vital voice in leading public debate about the realities of these transitions and the importance of promulgating the idea of a common, not a divided, humanity. Health leaders must begin to offer a positive and internationalist vision for human societies. Our task is urgent.”
- **Population Health Improvement Leadership Toolkit:** The Essential Hospitals Institute has released a new [toolkit](#) to help develop leadership positions for population health improvement. The toolkit provides several resources for hiring and evaluating population health executives, including: a core set of skills; a list of hiring considerations; a template job description; and a skill assessment worksheet. The tools are intended to facilitate hospitals in building the workforce and leadership they need to improve population health in their communities. Phase I of the project served

as a formative evaluation and included focus groups with member hospitals, qualitative interviews with experts in the field, and a stakeholder summit in July 2018. Phase II will focus specifically on curriculum and implementation for essential hospitals. The Institute is the research and quality arm of the America's Essential Hospitals (formerly the National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems).

- **New County Health Rankings Issued:** On Tuesday, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin released the latest [County Health Rankings](#), which helps counties understand what influences how healthy residents are and how long they will live. The Rankings are unique in their ability to measure the current overall health of each county in all 50 states. They also look at a variety of measures that affect the future health of communities, such as high school graduation rates, access to healthy foods, rates of smoking, obesity, and teen births.
- **PCORI Executive Director to Retire:** Dr. Joe Selby, the first and current Executive Director of the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), has [announced](#) he will retire at the end of 2019. He was named PCORI's Executive Director in May 2011 after the institute was enacted in the Affordable Care Act (ACA). To date, PCORI has awarded more than \$2.4 billion in support for research projects. Dr. Selby expressed confidence that Congress will act to reauthorize the institute's funding in coming months before its authorization expires at the end of FY 2019.

Distribution of the ASPPH Advocacy and Policy Newsletter

This newsletter is a benefit of ASPPH membership. It is distributed only to ASPPH primary representatives and section members. We encourage primary representatives to redistribute the newsletter to faculty and staff as they see fit.

[Forward Newsletter](#)

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