



Experts Discuss Ways to Slow “Epidemic Level” Addiction Problems in Appalachia Through Community-Based Interventions and Research

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Newswise — Columbus, Ohio – Nationwide, only one in ten people with substance abuse disorders receive medical intervention, opposed to nearly 90% of those with diabetes – a problem that becomes exponentially worse in the Appalachian region, where deaths from prescription drug overdoses have jumped 360% in the last decade.

Statistics like these and others were shared yesterday at the Fourth Annual Scientific Meeting of The Ohio State University Center for Clinical and Translational Science (CCTS), where a group of national policy leaders, researchers, community advocates and healthcare experts shared ideas and examples to help reverse the deadly substance abuse trends.

“People in Appalachia are already disproportionately affected by health issues like diabetes, cancer and obesity – a situation that is further complicated by the epidemic level abuse of prescription painkillers, tobacco, and alcohol,” said [Laureen Smith](#), PhD, an associate professor in the Ohio State [College of Nursing](#) who has extensive experience conducting research in Appalachia. “In order for interventions to be successful, they must not only address the region’s larger economic and social issues, but also engage aspects of the region’s culture – its history

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Description

Nationwide, only one in ten people with substance abuse disorders receive medical intervention, opposed to nearly 90% of those with diabetes – a problem that becomes exponentially worse in the Appalachian region, where deaths from prescription drug overdoses have jumped 360% in the last decade. Experts gathered at the Fourth Annual Scientific Meeting of The Ohio State University Center for Clinical and Translational Science (CCTS), to share ideas and examples to help reverse the deadly substance abuse trends that are further complicated by health disparities, social and economic issues unique to a region that spans 13 states.

Citations

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of a strong work ethic and close family and community ties - that can have a positive influence on efforts.”

The meeting provided a platform for scientists and clinicians to share ongoing projects around two interrelated tracks that enabled a big picture look at the unique health problems facing Appalachia. One track focused on how to build healthy communities by using community-based research approaches and programs, and the other track highlighted the complexities of tobacco, prescription drug and other substance addiction in Appalachia, and included examples of community based interventions that are helping overcome those issues.

White House Office of National Drug Control Policy Deputy Director Michael Botticelli delivered the keynote speech, noting the importance of treating addiction as a medical problem that can be effectively prevented and treated.

“Since day one, President Obama has made clear that policy decisions affecting health and safety should be guided by science and research, not ideology or dogma,” said Deputy Director Botticelli. “As a result, our nation’s drug policies are built upon the fact that addiction is a chronic disease of the brain that can be successfully prevented, treated, and from which people can recover. We are not powerless against substance use in America and we look forward to continuing our close working relationships with communities across Appalachia to ensure we do everything we can to protect public health and safety.”

This year’s meeting was hosted jointly by the CCTS, The Ohio University Appalachian Research Institute and the Appalachian Translational Research Network (ATRN), a network of community groups and academic medical research centers approaching the unique health issues of Appalachia through a translational science lens, a perspective that uses collaborations to help accelerate the process that lab research goes through to become real world health solutions.

“As an increasing number of Americans will have access to care under the Affordable Care Act, community health providers have a unique place, responsibility and opportunity to provide primary and preventive care,” said William Elwood, PhD, National Institutes of Health’s Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research and one of the meeting’s speakers. “We need to share and implement our best practices so we can provide the highest quality, most efficient care to a greater number of people. Today’s clinical and translational conference and others like it provide a crucial venue to meet this goal.”

Rural communities like those in Appalachia pose geographic challenges that make it difficult to conduct outreach and research, and information sharing between groups is limited, something that Ohio State CCTS director [Rebecca Jackson](#), MD, thinks the meeting can help change.

“We’re hopeful that the presentations, panel discussions and networking opportunities gave people the tools needed to integrate stakeholders — community members, patients and their families, healthcare providers and those who make public policy — as part of multidisciplinary scientific teams so that we can truly realize the promise of translational science to generate knowledge that is applied to

Fourth Annual Scientific Meeting May 2013



The Ohio State University Center for Clinical and Translational Science

White House Office of National Drug Control Policy Deputy Director Michael Botticelli delivered the keynote speech at the fourth Annual Scientific Meeting of The Ohio State University CCTS, noting the importance of treating addiction as a medical problem that can be effectively prevented and treated.

improve health,” said Jackson.

The Appalachian region is a 205,000-square-mile area that spans from southern New York to northern Mississippi. It includes all of West Virginia and parts of 12 other states with an estimated population of 24.8 million. States that include significant portions of Appalachia consistently demonstrate high rankings for many chronic illnesses and diseases, with Kentucky and West Virginia having some of the worst rankings in the U.S. in cancer deaths, smoking, obesity and diabetes.

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About The Ohio State University Center for Clinical and Translational Science

Dedicated to turning the scientific discoveries of today into the life-changing health innovations of tomorrow, The Ohio State University Center for Clinical and Translational Science (CCTS) is a collaboration of experts including scientists and clinicians from six Ohio State Health Science Colleges, [Ohio State's Wexner Medical Center](#) and [College of Medicine](#), and [Nationwide Children's Hospital](#). Funded by a multi-year Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) from the National Institutes of Health, OSU CCTS provides financial, organizational and educational support to biomedical researchers as well as opportunities for community members to participate in credible and valuable research. The CCTS is led by Rebecca Jackson, MD, Director of the CCTS and associate dean of research at Ohio State's College of Medicine. For more information, visit <http://ccts.osu.edu>.

About the Appalachian Translational Research Network (ATRN)

The ATRN is dedicated to enhancing research collaborations and seeking new avenues to address the significant health challenges and disparities in Appalachia. Members of the collaborative include the University of Kentucky, The Ohio State University, the University of Cincinnati, Marshall University, West Virginia University and the Appalachian Regional Commission.

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