



From the Executive Director

It seems we were just ringing in the new year 2022, and now summer is upon us; kids out of school, swimming pools open, family vacations, gardens being harvested, and yards being mowed, providing an abundance of gratitude. I hope everyone is staying safe during this busy time of the year. Due to the great advances made with the COVID-19 vaccines even with the COVID-19 variants,

we are slowly getting to the other side of this pandemic. If you are missing a loved one or someone close to you due to COVID-19, please know that Oklahoma Pharmacists Helping Pharmacists (OPHP) extends our heartfelt condolences. Our prayers are lifted up for those who are suffering from COVID-19, for a speedy recovery. As those of us in the medical profession are considered essential, we suit up and show up remaining on the front lines of this pandemic to take care of our patient's medical needs. As a pharmacist, we continue to play a vital role in the battle against this global pandemic and I am very proud of my chosen profession and our contribution to this fight. We are all in this together.

In this issue Enterhealth, a Dallas-based treatment center for chemical dependency and co-occurring issues has contributed an article for our readers "*Vaping, Nicotine and How to Treat This Legal Addiction*". For various reasons vaping or the use of e-cigarettes has become very popular vs actual smoking cigarettes. There is a tremendous amount of information available regarding the popularity of vaping. This article will provide accurate information and dispel some of the misinformation surrounding vaping. I would like to thank Enterhealth for their contribution and hope our readers find this article beneficial and learn something beneficial.

Also in this issue, OPHP is featuring an article from the Hazelden-Betty Ford Foundation, "*The Curse of Technology: Buying Drugs Online*". Danger is lurking on the internet and the results of buying drugs online can be deadly. I want every parent or loved one to realize this availability and can know what to look for in the impaired symptom inventory that has been included in this issue. At times due to the COVID-19, we may fail to remember that we are directly in the middle of a serious opioid crisis. We must continue to address this crisis to save fellow Oklahomans. I hope you enjoy and learn something from this article. I would like to thank Hazelden-Betty Ford Foundation for this great article



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From the Executive Director continued

The OPHP Board of Directors is pleased to announce the launch of the new free-standing OPHP website at www.ophp.us. I am excited to have this new resource available to help educate the public regarding the critical services OPHP provides the pharmacy profession and the advantage of self-reporting to OPHP issues of substance use disorder and other mental health issues.

OPHP recently mailed to all pharmacies in Oklahoma a magnet for a file cabinet or refrigerator that included the OPHP helpline number and new website address for quick reference if needed. If you didn't receive a magnet for your pharmacy or need extra contact OPHP and we will send it out right away.

Don't forget, to take time for self-care, and if you are struggling with chemical dependency or other mental health issues, or you know another pharmacist or student pharmacist who you think may be suffering call the (OPHP) Help-Line immediately. Some struggle or have a hard time dealing with life on life's terms on a daily basis. Can I challenge everyone to recognize these struggles either in themselves or others and reach out for help or be willing to help if needed? If you find yourself struggling don't hesitate to reach out to (OPHP) for help that is readily available if needed. If you know someone struggling during this time, I hope you will be willing to be available for them if needed. If you are a pharmacist or student pharmacist and you are struggling personally with a substance use disorder or other mental health issues, I would encourage you to call OPHP today and self-report your issues now. The advantages of self-reporting your own issues of substance use disorder or mental health issues are that you are able to get well or get in recovery, and if there are no legal issues or complaints the Oklahoma State Board of Pharmacy does not get involved. This is a tremendous opportunity, so don't let it slip away. If you are suffering from substance use disorder or other mental health issues call OPHP before it is too late and could then result in disciplinary action on your intern/pharmacy license or other legal consequences.

I encourage any pharmacist or student pharmacist that may be struggling with substance use disorder or any other mental health issue, or if you know a pharmacist or student pharmacist you think may be struggling, to call the OPHP Help Line now.



405-557-5773 (local) 1-800-260-7574 (statewide)

All calls are confidential and OPHP is readily available for help.

I assure you it is the best thing you could do for a family member, friend, colleague, or yourself. If there is no legal action the pharmacist or student pharmacist can get the help and treatment they need for their disease and remain anonymous to the Oklahoma State Board of Pharmacy as long as they comply with the recovery recommendations of OPHP.



If you haven't already contributed to OPHP this year, please consider making a tax-deductible contribution. These contributions help OPHP continue to assist and provide scholarships to pharmacists, pharmacy students and pharmacy technicians during the recovery process. Please [click here](#) to make a donation online. For those who have made a contribution this year, please accept our sincere thanks.

OPHP Helpline

*If anyone has questions or needs assistance
with a chemical dependency problem
either for a friend or themselves please call
Oklahoma Pharmacists Helping Pharmacists (OPHP)
405-557-5773 (local) 1-800-260-7574 (statewide)
There is a solution. All calls are confidential*

Vaping, Nicotine and How to Treat This Legal Addiction

While cigarette smoking has been on a downward trend for more than a decade, the use of electronic nicotine delivery systems (also known as electronic cigarettes, e-cigs, vapes, juuling, mods), known as “vaping,” is a trend that continues to rise with no signs of slowing down anytime soon. In fact, major companies including Phillip Morris (the makers of Marlboro cigarettes and others) are now getting into the e-cig arena.

The reasons behind the rise in popularity of e-cigs are many, but the main factors behind their meteoric rise to prominence include their low cost compared to traditional cigarettes, reusability, a myriad of flavor options, and the false perception that they are less harmful than traditional tobacco cigarettes. Unfortunately, all of these reasons are also behind the alarming rise in the use of e-cigs by youth and adolescents.

Why is this trend so alarming? Because if there is one subset of the population that is harmed most by nicotine – regardless of the delivery system – it’s young people.

What Are the Effects of Nicotine?

Without going into too much detail, nicotine works by mimicking neurotransmitters the body naturally produces, attaching to the receptors responsible for a number of functions, including muscle movement, breathing, heart rate, learning and memory. Stimulating these receptors also causes the release of other neurotransmitters and hormones which can affect a person’s mood, appetite, memory, learning ability and more.

Due to the flood of similar (or to your brain, identical) neurotransmitters, the body stops producing them naturally and reduces the number of receptors in the synapses. At this point, the brain is now reliant on a constant intake of nicotine to maintain normal function, which is the new state of a nicotine-addicted brain. If nicotine use decreases or stops, the brain now produces an inadequate supply of neurotransmitters, and there are too few receptors to function properly anyway, so the user will likely experience very uncomfortable withdrawal symptoms. These can include shakiness and trembling, sleeping problems, increased appetite and weight gain, irritability, and fatigue.

The good news is that if a person stops using nicotine, the number of receptors and their sensitivity to naturally produced neurotransmitters will eventually return, but only after prolonged abstinence.

Nicotine’s Toxic Effects on the Developing Brain

While it is still under debate, most researchers now agree that for the majority of people (there is always individual variation), the brain is still developing into their mid-20s. Moreover, research from the University of Rochester Medical Center (URMC) shows that teen and adult brains actually work differently.

Generally speaking, healthy adults think with their prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain responsible for rational thought. Teens and young adults, on the other hand, tend to process information with the amygdala, the part of the brain that handles emotion with only minimal input from their prefrontal cortex. This is because the connections between the amygdala (emotion) and the prefrontal cortex (rational thought) are still forming, often at different rates. In addition, the amygdala is also one of the parts of the brain responsible for forming “reward-system” pathways. All of this means that adolescents tend to be more motivated by rewards, less averse to risks, and more easily influenced by peers.

Nicotine use in adolescence has also been shown to lead to higher levels of dependence by exerting neurotoxic effects in the prefrontal cortex, interfering with normal cognitive development, executive functioning and inhibitory control. All of these changes make it more difficult for the adolescent brain to learn and remember new concepts. These effects are especially pronounced during stressful or emotionally intense times and are most noticeable when nicotine use begins during early adolescence.

The major implication of these facts is that teens and young adults are more sensitive to the addictive properties of nicotine. In fact, some studies have shown that adolescents report symptoms of nicotine dependence even at extremely low levels of consumption. Furthermore, evidence shows that once these reward-system pathways are established, the brain is more likely to develop similar pathways with other substances of abuse, making the person particularly susceptible to becoming addicted to cocaine and methamphetamine.

How Enterhealth Can Help

Nicotine addiction can be difficult to overcome. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) reports that every year, approximately 35 million smokers try to quit, but only about 15 percent are actually successful. People experiencing withdrawal from nicotine commonly experience irritability, powerful cravings, depression, difficulty sleeping, anxiety, heightened appetite, as well as trouble concentrating or remembering things.

However, there are ways to increase your chances of kicking the habit for good. Most experts agree the best methods combine medication – whether it's nicotine replacement therapy (transdermal patch, gum, lozenges, etc.) or another medication such as Chantix – with behavioral therapy.

Enterhealth offers a number of different smoking-cessation methods and behavioral therapies that utilize the latest science-based tools, medications and therapeutic techniques. In the Enterhealth smoking cessation program, you not only get access to the latest scientific methods to make it easier for you to stop successfully, you also get access to addiction-trained psychiatrists and therapists via our innovative, easy-to-use telehealth web interface. This affords patients convenient and confidential access to this care from the comfort of their own home. Additionally, our approach of creating individual treatment plans for each patient means we can pair the best possible methods and medications with each patient to get the best possible outcome.

Call (800) 388-4601 or visit Enterhealth.com to learn more.

Even if you do not choose to pursue smoking cessation with Enterhealth, we encourage anyone who is addicted to nicotine to seek help, and many smoking-cessation products can be purchased over the counter. To see the full list of FDA-approved smoking-cessation methods, [click here](#).

The Curse of Technology: Buying Drugs Online

How the internet is used to buy drugs online

The internet has changed the world forever. Its introduction into our homes, communities, workplaces and social spaces has fundamentally shifted every manner of interaction. For many, the internet has been miraculous: it educates people all across the planet, it expands the reach of resources and it ultimately glues us all together within its binary web of information and connectivity. But it also comes with a curse. One corner of the internet has become a marketplace for the buying and selling of all things illegal: the dark web. This is where drug trades, weapon sales, human trafficking and a number of other illegal operations are conducted behind the veil of internet anonymity. In this article, we'll focus on the purchase of drugs online, what the dark web really is, its dangers, how to tell if someone uses it and the best advice if you're concerned for someone using it.

Why do people use the dark web?

One of the bigger changes the internet has introduced to the global marketplace is the ability to find, purchase and receive goods without ever leaving the comfort of home. And the convenience is noticeably wonderful. But it also allows for the purchase of illegal drugs online, making some homes the scene of a drug transaction—often with parents or partners having no idea—and thus circumventing the need for either a prescription or pharmacy, or the visit to a drug dealer in person. Purchasers of illegal drugs are cautious in their transactions: they generally would not buy or sell drugs online over the World Wide Web—also known as the clear net or surface web—because their IP address would be traceable. Instead, they prefer the anonymity of the dark web.

What is the dark web?

Most web users spend their time on the surface web which makes up only a small fraction (an estimated five percent) of the internet. The majority of the internet (an estimated 95 percent) exists within the deep web, unindexed by search engines like Google and Bing. The dark web lives within the deep web, and it requires specific software, configurations and authorization to access. Once someone has access, they can use its dark web markets to anonymously purchase without prescription any drug they want from online dealers or illegal online pharmacies. And the cryptocurrencies—digital currencies with strong cryptography—that users often trade with add extra layers of anonymity, keeping secret any personal information about location or identity.

Much like the surface web, the dark web is made up of friend-to-friend and peer-to-peer networks, along with larger popular networks like Tor, Freenet and Riffle. The most popular Tor network is Silk Road—an online black market that allows anonymous browsing without any traffic monitoring.

What is Silk Road?

Silk Road was the first dark market of its kind, and it's best known for the buying and selling of illegal drugs online. Silk Road launched in 2011, and although it was shut down by the Federal Bureau of Investigations by 2013, it took less than a month for its successor, Silk Road 2.0, to launch. Silk Road 2.0 was then shut down once again in 2014, and the United States government later seized more than \$1 billion worth of Bitcoin in November 2020.

What can be bought on the dark web?

If it's illegal, it's likely found on the dark web, usually in dark markets or online pharmacies where buyers can leave a review just like Amazon or Yelp. This includes:

1. Stolen or skimmed credit card data
2. Research data such as medical research data on new drugs and therapies
3. Proprietary trade secrets and formulas
4. Blueprints for security plans for buildings and networks
5. Medical records
6. Financial records
7. Intelligence reports
8. Government secrets and investigations
9. Counterfeit money, gold, jewelry and other expensive branded goods
10. Fake IDs
11. Guns and other weapons
12. Sex and pornography
13. Drugs both legal and illegal, including marijuana (cannabis); stimulants like cocaine and methamphetamine; ecstasy, MDMA (Molly) and LSD; opioids like heroin, fentanyl, and OxyContin; and any prescription drugs normally found in a pharmacy like Adderall, Xanax or Valium.

Data suggests that almost 40 percent of the revenue from drug sales on the dark web is from marijuana. The next most popular drugs, making up about 30 percent of sales, are stimulants like cocaine and amphetamines. Followed closely behind are ecstasy-type drugs at around 20 percent. The United States leads the world in the cryptomarket-share of drugs being sold on the dark web, followed by the UK and Australia.

Is it safe to buy drugs through the dark web?

Because people are anonymous on the dark web, many people are falsely lulled into a sense of security when they purchase medications or illicit drugs online. But there are lots of unforeseen risks associated with these purchases, stemming from:

- The lack of quality control
- The possibility for a drug or medication to be laced with something stronger, like fentanyl
- The cutting of drugs with cheaper alternatives
- The threat of retribution from a dissatisfied consumer
- The inability to visually inspect a drug prior to purchase
- The likelihood of getting ripped off

And although the dark web offers anonymity for its user base, someone can still be arrested for buying or selling drugs on the dark web, which can result in a federal drug trafficking offense due to the national and international nature of these transactions.

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How can I tell if someone is using the dark web?

There are a few tactics someone should use to determine whether someone they know might be purchasing drugs or engaging in other illicit trades through the dark web:

1. Search all devices they use for "Tor." A search of this nature will turn up any software installed to help access the dark web.
2. Keep an eye out for suspicious packages. If the recipient is defensive and secretive about the package, there may be something they are hiding, especially if packages arrive with regularity.
3. Pay attention to money. How are they earning their money? How are they spending it? Do they have income or expenses that are unexplainable?

What should I do if I'm concerned?

1. Stay calm until you have all the information. Accessing the dark web doesn't necessarily mean anything illegal has happened.
2. Have an open and honest conversation, and engage in ongoing dialogue about the risks and dangers of the internet in general.
3. Set parental controls and privacy filters for younger users, and remove them as kids get older and demonstrate responsible behavior.
4. Recognize the warning signs of drug use.
5. Seek support from a professional who can provide a thorough assessment and recommendation for resources and support.



I encourage any pharmacist or student pharmacist that may be struggling with substance use disorder or any other mental health issue, or if you know a pharmacist or student pharmacist you think may be struggling, to call the OPHP Help Line now.

All calls are confidential and OPHP is readily available for help.

I assure you it is the best thing you could do for a family member, friend, colleague or yourself. If there is no legal action the pharmacist or student pharmacist can get the help and treatment they need for their disease and remain anonymous to the Oklahoma State Board of Pharmacy as long as they comply with the recovery recommendations of OPHP.

Identifying the Problem

Substance Use Disorder is a cunning, baffling, miserable disease. Denial is a major factor involved stopping those with this disease from seeking help for themselves. So often concerned family members, friends and colleagues, express knowledge that a problem exists, but are unable to identify it. The following *Impaired Pharmacist Symptom Inventory* may help to identify the problem, and get them the help that is so readily available before it is too late.

Impaired Pharmacist Symptom Inventory

- Overwork**
- Disorganized schedule
- Spasmodic work pace**
- Unreasonable behavior
- Inaccessible to patients and employer
- Prescription errors**
- Patient complaints
- Frequent absences
- Decreasing workload and tolerance
- Frequent days off for vague reasons
- Taking sexual advantage of coworkers or customers
- Filling illegal prescriptions
- Taking and/or using drugs from pharmacy without follow-up by physician**
- Taking/selling drugs to others or giving them to family or friends
- Often late, absent or ill
- Decreasing work performance
- “Pharmacy Gossip”
- Incommunicative/unavailable
- Alcohol on breath while in pharmacy

**early signs

What do you do if you suspect a colleague has a problem with substance use disorder?

Trust your instincts!!

Call Oklahoma Pharmacists Helping Pharmacists (OPHP)

immediately OPHP Helpline 800-260-7574

Do not confront alone

Left alone the problem will not go away.

If you or a pharmacist you care about is suffering from substance use disorder

There is a solution

Oklahoma Pharmacists Helping Pharmacists (OPHP)

Is readily available for help

Call the OPHP Helpline 800-260-7574

All calls are confidential.

American Pharmacist Association (APhA) Institute on Substance Use Disorders

June 1, 2022 – June 5, 2022 the American Pharmacists Association (APhA) held the annual in person APhA Institute on Substance Use Disorders at the University of Utah Campus, Salt Lake City, UT, after two years of being canceled due to COVID-19. Oklahoma Pharmacists Helping Pharmacists (OPHP) sponsored four (4) student pharmacists from Southwestern Oklahoma State University (SWOSU) College of Pharmacy, three (3) student pharmacists from The University of Oklahoma College of Pharmacy, and myself to this event.

The APhA Institute on Substance Use Disorders, lasted four days and is packed with speakers, 12-step meetings, and personal stories of recovery focusing on chemical dependency and its impact on the pharmacy profession and personal recovery. Many of the student pharmacists attending are unsure why they are there until the first 12-step meeting when it becomes clear how chemical dependency or alcoholism has impacted their lives either personally or through a family member or close friends. This allows each attendee the opportunity of self-awareness and healing to begin and continue before the disease manifests itself in a more destructive way. In an upcoming issue of “Prescription” each attendee to this event from Oklahoma has submitted details for our readers about their experience at this meeting which is often referred to as the “Utah Experience”.

Oklahoma Pharmacists Helping Pharmacists (OPHP)

***405-557-5773 locally—1-800-260-7574 statewide
There is a solution.***

**WHAT DO YOU DO IF YOU SUSPECT A COLLEAGUE
HAS A PROBLEM WITH SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER**

Trust your instincts!!

**Call Oklahoma Pharmacists Helping Pharmacists (OPHP) immediately
at the OPHP Help Line 1-800-260-7574 statewide or
405-557-5773 locally
Do not confront alone
Left alone the problem will not go away.**

**If you or a pharmacist you care about is suffering from s
substance use disorder there is a solution.**

**Oklahoma Pharmacists Helping Pharmacists (OPHP)
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**Call the OPHP Help Line
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ALL CALLS ARE CONFIDENTIAL

