



Vermont Center on Behavior & Health

The University of Vermont

Issue 6, January 2018

NEWS & VIEWS from the VCBH

*Investigating the relationships between behavior and
the risk for chronic disease & premature death.*

Success at the 5th Annual VCBH Conference: *Tobacco Regulatory Science*

The 5th Annual VCBH Conference, held October 5-6, in Burlington Vermont, brought together leading tobacco researchers from universities and medical centers nationwide to share their knowledge on tobacco regulatory science. Keynote speaker, Mitch Zeller, J.D., gave an outstanding presentation outlining the FDA's new plan for nicotine regulation, which has the potential to reduce overall smoking prevalence and improve public health.



[Click here to view the recorded presentations.](#)

VCBH Introduces 2017-2018 COBRE Project Directors

After a rigorous selection process, the VCBH has chosen five excellent UVM junior faculty as the COBRE's next round of Project Directors (PDs). The PDs will receive research funding and mentoring with the overarching goal of having them succeed in obtaining their first NIH independent research grant (R01 or equivalent). Click below to meet our PDs!

VCBH Project Directors

Higgins to speak on Nicotine Reduction Symposium at 2018 SRNT Conference

VCBH Director, Stephen Higgins, Ph.D., will join the nation's leading tobacco researchers at the 2018 Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco (SRNT) Conference, to discuss supporting evidence of the proposed reduced nicotine policy to decrease smoking rates. The panel will also look to identify important research gaps and issues raised by this policy. Dr. Higgins will describe his most recent epidemiological and human laboratory studies on the impact of reduced nicotine content cigarettes in vulnerable populations. Other presenters include: Dorothy Hatsukami, Ph.D., (University of Minnesota), Saul Shiffman, Ph.D., (University of Pittsburgh), & Eric Donny, Ph.D., (Wake Forest University).



Preventive Medicine Fourth Special Issue, November 2017



The November 2017 Special Issue of Preventive Medicine is the fourth in a series that focuses on behavior change, health, and health disparities. Contributors to these Special Issues are selected from participants in the VCBH's Annual Conference on Behavior Change, Health, and Health Disparities. The topics covered are of critical importance to improving U.S. population health. Dr. Stephen Higgins, Guest Editor and Director of the Vermont Center on Behavior and Health, explains that,

"Behavior change represents an essential step in improving population health generally and curtailing health disparities more specifically." Please visit our [Preventive Medicine](#) web page to learn more about the Special Issue and to view the online publication.

Research Grant Award Spotlight



VCBH faculty member, Stacey Sigmon, Ph.D., received a \$3.7 million grant from the National Institute of Drug Abuse to continue the development and evaluation of a novel Interim Buprenorphine Treatment (IBT), that leverages pharmacotherapy, state-of-the-art technology, and rigorous methodology to bridge existing wait list delays in treatment access. Sigmon states, "In an initial R32 randomized pilot study, we demonstrated reductions in illicit opioid use and risk behaviors among wait listed opioid abusers receiving IBT. This project will seek to replicate those highly promising results while simultaneously evaluating generality of our findings to additional rural settings outside of University of Vermont."

Trainee Profiles: *TCORS Graduate Students*



Left to right: Bergeria, Streck, and Davis exploring Palm Springs while attending the 2016 CPDD Conference.

[Cecilia Bergeria](#) is in her 5th and final year in the Experimental Psychology program as a Tobacco Center on Regulatory Science predoctoral trainee. Her research focuses on substance use and how it impacts women's health during their reproductive years. She is very proud of her Master's thesis, "Comparing Smoking Topography and Subjective Measures of Usual Brand Cigarettes Between Pregnant and Non-pregnant Smokers", which was recently published in *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*.

[Danielle Davis](#) is a 4th year student in the Experimental Psychology program with a concentration in Human Behavioral Pharmacology. Her research focuses on the effects of reduced nicotine content cigarettes and she specifically is interested in the moderating effect of mentholation. She is also interested in contingency management interventions and is currently conducting a pilot study investigating the impact of a contingency management intervention for smoking cessation in pregnant women on infant eating behavior postpartum. Recently, Danielle presented the results of her Master's Project examining the moderating effect of menthol content in reduced nicotine content cigarettes at the 2017 College of Problems on Drug Dependence Annual Meeting.

[Joanna Streck](#) is a 4th year student in the Clinical Psychology program. Her research focuses on the effects of reduced-nicotine content cigarettes in vulnerable populations, with a focus on those with concurrent opioid use disorder. She is also interested in intersections between opioid use disorder, tobacco use disorder, and psychopathology. Recently, Joanna presented the results of a randomized clinical trial examining the effects of reduced-nicotine content cigarettes on vulnerable populations at the TCORS Grantee meeting at the NIH.

Highlighted Publications

- Higgins ST, Heil SH, Sigmon SC, et al. [Addiction potential of reduced nicotine content cigarettes in populations with psychiatric disorders and other vulnerabilities to tobacco addiction.](#) JAMA Psych. 2017 Oct 1;74(10):1056-1064
 - Khadanga S, Ades PA. [What do we tell patients with coronary artery disease about marijuana use?](#) Coron Artery Dis. 2017, Oct 3. In press.
 - Kurti AN, Redner R, Lopez AA, et al. [Tobacco and nicotine delivery product use in a national sample of pregnant women.](#) Prev Med. 2017, Aug 5. In press.
 - Higgins TM, Dougherty AK, Badger GJ, Heil SH. [Comparing long-acting reversible contraception insertion rates in women with Medicaid vs. private insurance in a clinic with a two-visit protocol.](#) Contraception. 2017, Sept 5. In press.
 - Brooklyn JR, Sigmon SC. [Vermont hub-and-spoke model of care for opioid use disorder: development, implementation, and impact.](#) J Addict Med. 2017, July/August. In-press.
-
-

NOTEWORTHY

Save the Date: **2018 VCBH Conference!** The 6th Annual VCBH Conference will be held October 11 & 12, 2018, in Burlington, Vermont. The year's Keynote Speaker is **Sharon Walsh, Ph.D.** from the University of Kentucky. For more information, please visit our [website](#).

Former VCBH postdoctoral fellows, **Bader Charani, Ph.D. and Allison Kurti, Ph.D.** join the VCBH faculty! Charani is working on a national [Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development Study](#) while Kurti is a new [Project Director](#) on the COBRE.

Higgins et al, JAMA Psychiatry paper on reduced nicotine content cigarettes in vulnerable populations, garnered national and international coverage, appearing in main stream media outlets including, [MedPage Today](#), the [Independent \(UK\)](#), and the [New York Daily News](#).

VCBH faculty and COBRE Project Director, **Andrea Villanti, Ph.D.**, was awarded the SRNT 2018 Jarvik-Russell Early Career Award, which honors members early in

their careers who have made extraordinary contributions to the field of nicotine and tobacco research

T32 predoctoral fellow, **Elias Klemperer**, participated in the American Cancer Society's, "Great American Smoke Out", live stream Facebook event. To listen to his interview, visit [UVMMC's Facebook page!](#)

For the latest news and complete list of VCBH publications, please visit our [website](#).



Copyright © 2018 University of Vermont, All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can update your preferences **or** unsubscribe from this list.

