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**Subject:** APA Headlines: US Alcohol Deaths Have Reached A 35-Year High, CDC Finds  
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Good morning Ms Cathy Thompson

December 23, 2015

## Holiday Message

In observance of the Christmas holiday, we will not publish on Thursday, December 24, 2015 and Friday, December 25, 2015. Service will resume on Monday, December 28, 2015. We wish our readers a safe and happy holiday.

## Leading The News

### US Alcohol Deaths Have Reached A 35-Year High, CDC Finds.

The [Washington Post](#) (12/23, Ingraham) "Wonkblog" reports that US alcohol deaths have reached a "35-year high." In 2014, some "30,700 Americans died from alcohol-induced causes, including alcohol poisoning and cirrhosis." Excluded from this figure are "deaths from drunk driving, other accidents, and homicides committed under the influence of alcohol." Were those deaths to be "included, the annual toll of deaths directly or indirectly caused by alcohol would be closer to 90,000, according to" a CDC [report](#) published Dec. 18 in the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report.

[TIME](#) (12/23, Chan) points out, "Excessive alcohol use is a leading cause of preventable death, according to the" CDC, accounting "for about 88,000 deaths each from 2006 to 2010, health officials said."

## Psychiatric News Alert



[Psychiatrists Report High Satisfaction Working in Integrated Care Teams, Study Shows](#)

[School-Based Mindfulness Program May Help Urban Children Deal With Negative Stress](#)

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## Psychiatric Treatment/Disorders

**Brain Tumor May Be The Cause Of Unexplained Depression, Case Study Suggests.**

The [Telegraph \(UK\)](#) (12/23) reports that individuals “over 50 suffering from unexplained depression, which does not respond to treatment should be scanned” to see if they have “a brain tumour...said” physicians. The case of a “54-year-old French woman” who “was found to have a huge tumour in her brain after reporting depressive symptoms for six months” was published Dec. 20 in [BMJ Case Reports](#).

## Government and Psychiatry

### **ACA Sees Progress, Challenges As It Enters Third Year.**

The [Chicago Tribune](#) (12/23, Sachdev) reports on the “progress and challenges of Obamacare as it enters its third year.” The law has significantly reduced the number of uninsured Americans, and the technical glitches that plagued the Federal website in the first year “were fixed.” Still, buying insurance “is a complex transaction” and customers are facing rising premiums in 2016. Andy Slavitt, acting administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, “acknowledges that Obamacare has been a ‘bumpy ride’ for consumers.” Slavitt said, “You have to be a little bit more of an educated consumer,” adding, “We’re trying to offer people a level of help that will help them through these challenges.”

### **Senators Call For Action On Newborns With Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome.**

[Reuters](#) (12/23, Shiffman, Wilson) reports that Sens. Robert Casey (D-PA) and Charles Schumer (D-NY) are calling for action and a surge of funds to protect thousands of infants born each year with neonatal abstinence syndrome. A Department of Health and Human Services spokesman said that the senators’ request is being considered.

### **Judge Orders Nevada To Provide Timely Mental Health Treatment To Inmates.**

The [Las Vegas Review-Journal](#) (12/23, Amaro) reports that Federal Judge Miranda M. Du on Tuesday approved an amended settlement under which “Nevada will have to eliminate the wait list of those stuck at the Clark County Detention Center waiting for mental health treatment by March 1, 2016, and those waiting in jails across the state by April 1, 2016.” Under Du’s order, if Nevada “fails to clear the wait list in Clark County by March 1 or fails to implement other enforcement requirements, a monitor would be appointed at the state’s expense.” Du’s order follows her October 28 ruling that Nevada violated “a 2014 federal lawsuit settlement to provide prompt treatment to mentally ill inmates languishing in jail.”

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## Psychiatry and Public Health

### **NIDA Researcher: Synthetic Marijuana “The Emerging Face Of Drug Abuse.”**

[PBS NewsHour](#) (12/23) correspondent William Brangham sat down with National Institute on Drug Abuse toxicologist Dr. Marilyn Huestis, among others, to discuss the “rise of the drug synthetic marijuana, commonly known as Spice or K2.” In the interview, Dr. Huestis predicted that synthetic marijuana will be “the emerging face of drug abuse for the future,” adding that some of the new drugs that come out are “very potent, up to 100 times as potent as cannabis.” She is studying the chemical composition of synthetic drugs in her lab and notes the challenges of identifying the “ever-changing cocktail of chemicals.”

### **College Students Who Smoke Marijuana Appear More Likely Than Their Peers To Skip Classes.**

[HealthDay](#) (12/23, Norton) reports, “College students who smoke marijuana appear more likely than their peers to skip classes – which eventually leads to poorer grades and later graduation,” a [study](#) published in the September issue of the journal *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors* suggests.

## APA in the News

### **Psychology Practice Files Collection Cases In Which Patients’ Diagnoses Were Listed, Court Records Show.**

The [New York Times](#) (12/23, Ornstein, Subscription Publication) runs a ProPublica piece detailing the case of a New Jersey attorney “whose name and treatments for mental illness were included in publicly available documents in a lawsuit” filed by Short Hills Associates, “a psychology practice for an unpaid bill.” According to the Times, between the years “2010 and 2014, Short Hills Associates filed 24 collections cases in which patients’ diagnoses were listed, New Jersey court records show.” The lawsuits “identified diagnoses by unique codes listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, the reference work on mental illness published by the American Psychiatric Association.” People can obtain the meaning of the codes by searching online.

## Psychiatric Medication Update

## CMS To Track Opioid, Antipsychotic Use Among Medicaid, CHIP Recipients.

[Modern Healthcare](#) (12/23, Dickson, Subscription Publication) reports that “the CMS plans to more closely track the use of opioids by adults and antipsychotics among children and adolescents with new quality measures for Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program.” The agency “will require Medicaid programs, beginning no later than December 2016, to track the use of opioids at high dosages acquired from four or more [clinicians] and pharmacies by beneficiaries who don’t have cancer.” Modern Healthcare adds that “Medicaid recipients are twice as likely as people in commercial insurance plans to receive a prescription for an opioid painkiller and six times as likely to overdose on the drugs, according to a 2014 study.”

## High Cumulative Exposure To Benzodiazepines May Be Tied To Significantly Increased Risk For Premature Death Among Patients With Schizophrenia.

[Medscape](#) (12/23, Brooks) reports, “High cumulative exposure to benzodiazepines is common in patients with schizophrenia and is associated with a significantly increased risk for premature death,” the [findings](#) of a 21,492-patient study published online Dec. 7 in the American Journal of Psychiatry suggest. The study found that high “benzodiazepine exposure was...associated with a 70% higher risk for death compared with no exposure.”

### Practice Management

## Congress Passes Bill Allowing Mass Exemptions From Meaningful Use Penalties.

[Medscape](#) (12/23, Lowes) reports that last week, Congress “passed a bipartisan bill that would help spare physicians a 3% Medicare pay cut in 2017 by rectifying extreme and uncontrollable circumstances created by none other than the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).” Since “there were fewer than 90 days left in 2015 when [the CMS rules] came out,” it was “impossible for physicians to comply and avoid the penalty.” To rectify the situation, the CMS “said physicians could apply for a hardship exemption from the 2017 penalty under the category of ‘extreme and uncontrollable’ circumstances,” which would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. The bill, which awaits the president’s signature, “aimed to head off this looming bureaucratic logjam” by granting hardship exemptions to “entire categories of physicians.”

[Healthcare IT News](#) (12/23, Nielson) reports that the “blanket hardship exception” was part of “the Patient Access and Medicare Protection Act, offering [practitioners] wider latitude for securing exemptions from possible fines.” Renee Ellmers (R-NC) said in a press statement, “Moving forward, this process will now allow doctors to avoid erroneous penalties that would have otherwise caused harm for patients seeking quality care.”

### Other News

## NFL Under Fire For Reportedly Withholding Funding For NIH Concussion Study.

[ABC World News](#) (12/22, story 13, 0:25, Muir) reported that the NFL is “under fire” for “withholding \$16 million from researchers investigating football-related head trauma.” The NFL was funding the study, which is being conducted by the National Institutes of Health, but the league was “reportedly critical of the doctor leading the project.” NFL officials are “disputing the report.”

The [Washington Post](#) (12/23, Larimer) reports on the [ESPN “Outside the Lines”](#) story, which claimed that the NFL “backed out” of the planned seven-year, \$16 million research project to attempt to diagnose chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) in living patients.” The study was originally “to have been paid for by a \$30 million grant from the NFL made to the National Institutes of Health in 2012.” However, “the NIH will fund the study itself, according to a Tuesday morning news release.”

The [New York Times](#) (12/23, B9, Belson, Subscription Publication) reports that the National Institutes of Health and the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke awarded the grant “as part of a long-term study of brain disease in former NFL and college football players, many of whom sustained multiple concussions on the field,” but the NFL “did not help pay for the grant.”

[USA Today](#) (12/23, Perez) reports that the “new project would be led by Robert Stern, a professor of neurology and neurosurgery” at Boston University (BU). However, the NFL, according to ESPN, “raised concerns about Stern’s objectivity.” The league is disputing those claims that it pulled funding for the study. The NFL released a statement saying “The NFL did not pull funding from the BU study. The NIH makes all funding decisions. The NFL has no ‘veto power’ as part of its unrestricted \$30 million grant to NIH.” The NIH released a statement in response saying, “The NIH is funding the CTE study led by Dr. Robert Stern at Boston University, in coordination with three other sites, which was announced this week. The NFL is currently funding eight ongoing studies in the area of traumatic brain injury.”

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### Tuesday's Lead Stories

- [Older Women May Also Exhibit Symptoms Of Eating Disorders.](#)

- [Ebola Survivors Can Face Depression, Anxiety.](#)
- [CMS Releases “Dashboard” To Show Medicare Medication Spending.](#)
- [CDC’s Proposed Opioid Prescribing Guidelines Debated.](#)
- [CMS Releases Draft Plan For New Payment Models.](#)
- [FDA Lifts Lifetime Ban On Blood Donations From Gay Men.](#)

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