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**Using social media to better understand, prevent, and treat substance use**  
*NIH announces 11 awards funded across three Institutes*

More than \$11 million over three years will be used to support research exploring the use of social media to advance the scientific understanding, prevention, and treatment of substance use and addiction. The awards are funded through the Collaborative Research on Addiction at NIH (CRAN), an NIH consortium involving the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism ([NIAAA](#)), the National Institute on Drug Abuse ([NIDA](#)), and the National Cancer Institute ([NCI](#)). The consortium was established to integrate resources and expertise to advance research and improve public health outcomes related to the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other addictive substances. NIAAA, NIDA, and NCI are components of the National Institutes of Health.



“These awards are the result of an active collaboration among the three institutes to develop innovative approaches that advance the science of substance use and addiction,” said NIDA Director Dr. Nora D. Volkow. “We hope to learn more about how changing technologies affect interpersonal communications and factual knowledge about tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs, including the nonmedical use of prescription drugs.”

Interactive platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have become important sources of public information, and are powerful tools to help scientists identify prevailing attitudes and myths and convey accurate information to the public about alcohol, tobacco, and other addictive substances. Researchers can analyze social media interactions to gain insights into patterns of use, risk factors, and behaviors associated with substance use. By providing a platform for communicating science-based, health-related messages, social media may also enhance screening, prevention, and treatment of substance use and addiction. To help address these needs, CRAN issued two [funding opportunities](#) to support research that leverages social media platforms to advance the scientific understanding of substance use or improve the treatment and prevention of behaviors related to substance use.

“The ubiquity and widespread use of social media underscores the need to address numerous questions regarding the intersection of social media with substance use and abuse, as well as its potential as a tool for preventing and treating substance abuse problems,” said NIAAA Director Dr. George Koob. “With these awards the CRAN collaboration is making an important investment that could impact the diverse health problems associated with the abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and other addictive substances.”

“Social media has the potential to fill important gaps in our current understanding of tobacco, alcohol and drug use and to improve the efficacy of substance abuse interventions. For example, user-generated social media interactions can reveal important insights into substance use patterns and various social factors,” said Dr. Wen-ying (Sylvia) Chou, program director in NCI’s Health Communications and Informatics Research Branch and NCI’s program contact for the funding opportunities. “Social media platforms also have the potential to increase the effectiveness of substance use prevention and treatment efforts by providing technologically mediated solutions.”

Awardees are:

- Warren Bickel, Ph.D., Virginia Tech, Blacksburg  
Social [networks] of recovery: Social media as therapy development (NIDA grant DA039456)
- Patricia Cavazos-Rehg, Ph.D., Washington University, St. Louis  
Implications of social media content and engagement for alcohol and marijuana use (NIDA grant DA039455)
- Brenda Curtis, Ph.D., Treatment Research Institute, Philadelphia  
Predicting [alcohol and other drug] relapse and treatment completion from social media use (NIDA grant DA039457)
- Raminta Daniulaityte, Ph.D., Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio  
Trending: Social media analysis to monitor cannabis and synthetic cannabinoid use (NIDA grant DA039454)
- Yong Ge, Ph.D., University Of North Carolina at Charlotte  
Mining patterns of substance use by young adults with social media data (NIAAA grant AA023975)
- Amanda Graham, Ph.D., American Legacy Foundation, Washington  
Social dynamics of substance use in online social networks for smoking cessation (NCI grant CA192345)
- Annice Kim, Ph.D., Research Triangle Institute, Research Triangle Park, North Carolina  
Using social media data for e-cigarette surveillance and policy research (NCI grant CA192240)
- Sabrina Oesterle, Ph.D., University of Washington, Seattle  
Using Facebook to recruit parents to a parenting program to prevent teen drug use (NIDA grant DA039466)
- Marya Schulte, Ph.D., University of California, Los Angeles  
PURPOSE: A social media intervention for parent support (NIDA grant DA039459)
- Scott Ian Vrieze, Ph.D., University of Colorado, Boulder  
Social media, online measures, and substance use development in adolescent twins (NIAAA grant AA023974)
- Sean Young, Ph.D., University of California, Los Angeles  
Adapting the HOPE social media intervention to reduce prescription drug abuse (NIDA grant DA039458)

For descriptions of each project, go to

[http://projectreporter.nih.gov/Reporter\\_Viewsh.cfm?sl=13E8C00F478AC1D67598B8961CAA4A01A2FFCEB861BF](http://projectreporter.nih.gov/Reporter_Viewsh.cfm?sl=13E8C00F478AC1D67598B8961CAA4A01A2FFCEB861BF). For more information on CRAN, go to

<http://addictionresearch.nih.gov/about-us>.

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The mission of the Collaborative Research on Addiction at NIH (CRAN) is to provide a strong collaborative framework to enable the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), and the National Cancer Institute (NCI) to integrate resources and expertise to advance substance use, abuse, and addiction research and public health outcomes. More information can be found at <http://addictionresearch.nih.gov/about-us>.

**About the National Institutes of Health (NIH):** NIH, the nation's medical research agency, includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIH is the primary federal agency conducting and supporting basic, clinical, and translational medical research, and is investigating the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit [www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov).

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