

# Study shows multidisciplinary approach successful in curbing opioid use

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A new study by University of Kentucky College of Medicine researchers outlines a medication plan that may be a key to treating those suffering from opioid use disorder. The research was presented at IDWeek, the

joint annual meeting of the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA), Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America (SHEA), the HIV Medical Association (HIVMA), the Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society (PIDS) and the Society of Infectious Diseases Pharmacists (SIDP).

"Our intervention is about linking patients with IV drug use associated infections to outpatient addiction treatment services," says Sarah R. Blevins, a UK HealthCare pharmacist and the lead on the study, who has also helped treat those with Hepatitis C and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

In 2018, UK HealthCare reported 400 cases of endocarditis, an infection of the inner lining of the heart chamber and valves, of which 73% were injection drug use-associated infections. To curb overdose deaths, ease the [financial burden](#) on [health care](#), and improve [patient outcomes](#), the researchers worked with patients who need tools for recovery from [opioid use disorder](#), such as mental health therapists, relapse-prevention services, and necessary medications.

"All of this goes back to the issue of addiction," says Alice Thornton, UK College of Medicine's chief of the Division of Infectious Disease. "We have to step back and see the whole person and the root of the problem."

Kentucky ranks in the top five states in the nation for opioid [overdose deaths](#), and this treatment approach may be a model for other states with large rural populations. Access to opioid use disorder treatment in Kentucky and much of the U.S. is limited. Poverty, unemployment, and [legal issues](#) are barriers, as well as transportation to treatment for those who live in rural areas—an issue that researchers say came up frequently regarding their patients. Limited access to clinics due to COVID-19-related closings has been a challenge to treatment recently.

