The following is a compendium of news reports over the past month that may be of interest to our AG offices who are dealing with substance abuse issues. Neither the National Association of Attorneys General nor the National Attorneys General Training & Research Institute expresses a view as to the accuracy of news accounts, nor as to the position expounded by the authors of the hyperlinked articles.

New Developments in Combatting Opioid Abuse

**Georgia Attorney General Sam Olens** is launching a video contest, entitled “We’re Not Going to Take It.” General Olens is asking high school students to create a 30-second video explaining why they are steering clear of prescription drug abuse. Additional details can be found at this link. Click on the link listed below to view a flyer that explains the contest in greater detail.

![We're Not Gonna Take It Flyer.pdf](attachment:We're Not Gonna Take It Flyer.pdf)

**Indiana Attorney General Greg Zoeller** is collaborating with the other members of the state’s Prescription Drug Task Force to prevent prescription drug abuse within his state by trying to change the way doctors and patients handle pain. This article details the steps that have been taken by the Task Force, of which General Zoeller was a founding member. The Task Force has recently developed new rules which the Medical Licensing Board is currently enacting which requires doctors to consult PDMPs, complete pain assessment and drug-screening tests and evaluate a patient’s mental health status and risk of addiction prior to prescribing opioid pain killers.

**North Carolina Attorney General Roy Cooper** is working to prevent prescription drug abuse within his state. At a recent drug prevention summit at North Carolina State University, he detailed the steps taken by the state to address the problem. For example, the State Bureau of Investigations is now handling approximately 400% more prescription drug abuse cases “in the last few years.” The state has also held prescription drop off drives.

A Rowan County, North Carolina, elementary school teacher and her doctor husband were charged with participation in a prescription drug ring. Five other school employees were charged as well. The doctor wrote prescriptions for hydrocodone, which were filled by other teachers. The teachers then returned the pills to the doctor and his wife. Over seventeen months, the couple obtained approximately 25,000 pills.
Pennsylvania’s Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP) and the state’s Department of Health have [created](#) the Safe and Effective Prescribing Practices and Pain Management Task Force. The task force is made up of health care professionals, regulatory agency representatives and representatives of associations and is working to ensure that practitioners are prescribing opioids appropriately and that prescribers can identify abuse and addiction problems.

A federal grand jury in California has charged FedEx with conspiring to deliver prescription drugs for illegal Internet pharmacies. Federal prosecutors have stated that FedEx knew that it was delivering illegal drugs, citing as evidence that it set up “special credit policies for internet pharmacies so it wouldn’t lose money if police shut the sites down.” The indictment links FedEx to two internet pharmacies.

The National Safety Council has established a Prescription Drug Employer Kit. The kit is free and teaches employers about issues relating to prescription drug abuse, including worker’s compensation, opioid prescribing practices, and healthcare issues. The kit can be accessed at this link.

This month, the FDA [approved](#) a new extended-release oxycodone pill that has abuse-deterrent properties. The pill, called Targiniq ER, is manufactured by Purdue Pharma L.P., and contains naloxone. When the pill is crushed and either snorted or dissolved and injected, the naloxone blocks the “euphoric effects” of the oxycodone.

This month, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released a [report](#) that observed the variation among states in prescribing opioid pain relievers and benzodiazepines during 2012. The study also looked at prescription drug overdoses. The CDC found that overdoses in Florida fell by 23 percent from 2010 to 2012. The significance of this drop was explained in a recent [New York Times](#) article.

The CDC report also examined nationwide prescribing practices. In response to the CDC report, the American Medical Association issued a statement, which can be accessed by clicking on this [link](#).

The United States House of Representatives passed a bill that would amend the definition of “imminent danger to public health or safety” that is contained within the Controlled Substances Act. The modified definition would apply to prescription drugs that [pose present or foreseeable health risks](#). Before a drug is suspended, the related pharmaceutical company would be allowed to submit a corrective action plan to the DEA.

United States Attorney General Eric Holder has [urged](#) federal law enforcement agencies to review their procedures to determine whether they should equip their personnel with Naloxone.

Pennsylvania’s State Drug and Alcohol Program and State Health Department have [developed](#) new voluntary recommendations for doctors who prescribe opioids for the treatment of non-cancer pain.

Anthony D’Alessandro, a former pharmacy director at Beth Israel Hospital in New York, was charged with the theft of over $5 million in pain killers. Prosecutors believe that he sold the pills on the black market.
Recently, fentanyl-laced heroin was seized in North Carolina. Police chiefs within the state are working together, along with the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, to develop a new plan for how law enforcement handles drugs and drug trafficking within the state.

**New Efforts in the Fight Against Methamphetamine**

An Aloha, Oregon woman was arrested after her two-year-old grandchild drank the woman’s tea, which was allegedly laced with methamphetamine. The child, who was agitated, scratching and talking rapidly, tested positive for methamphetamine.

**Hot Topics Relating to Synthetic Cannabinoids**

John Tebbetts of Onondaga County, New York, pled guilty to two felonies in connection with the sale of bath salts at his chain of head shops. He also admitted to owing more than $616,000 in state and income tax to the state.

**Updates in the Field of Marijuana Legalization**

This month, Colorado’s largest detox network reported that the number of its patients arrested for driving while under the influence of marijuana had increased from 8 to 15 percent over the past year.

Senators from Colorado and Washington sent a letter to White House Chief of Staff Denis McDonough and United States Attorney General Eric Holder asking for a “clear, consistent and uniform interpretation and application” of federal drug laws, as uncertainty regarding how federal laws that outlaw marijuana will be implemented “may undermine [their] states’ ability to regulate the industry adequately.”

In mid-July, Washington, D.C.’s marijuana decriminalization bill went into effect. Possession of up to 28 grams of marijuana by adults 18 or older is now a civil offense. This article explains the differences between the old law and the current law and also points out that, in the District of Columbia, the smell of marijuana alone is not sufficient grounds for a search by the police.

This month, recreational marijuana stores began to open in Washington State. In total, 24 stores are now operating. This article details the current state of the law in Washington.

**Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome**

In mid-July, a woman was the first to be charged under Tennessee’s new law that criminalizes the use of illegal narcotic drugs while pregnant. Both the woman and her baby tested positive for methamphetamine. Click on the link provided in this paragraph to see the full text of the statute. Please note that the bill includes as an affirmative defense to prosecution that the woman is “actively enrolled in an addiction recovery program before the child is born, remained in the program after delivery, and successfully completed the program, regardless of whether the child was born addicted to or harmed by the narcotic drug.”
While Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam has said that the law will “give law enforcement and district attorneys a tool to address illicit drug use among pregnant women through treatment programs,” the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) believes that it “raises serious constitutional concerns regarding equal treatment under the law and jeopardizes the health and well-being of Tennesseans.”

**Other News of Interest**

**Maine Attorney General Janet Mills** recently warned Maine citizens of a deadly mix of heroin, caffeine, fentanyl and acetyl fentanyl, which has been causing faster overdoses than straight heroin.

New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman and New York City Police Department Commissioner William Bratton announced the takedown of a khat trafficking ring. Seventeen arrests were made. The ring spanned New York, Massachusetts and Ohio. The drug was obtained from multiple countries, including Yemen, Kenya and Ethiopia and shipped to the United States through the United Kingdom, China, Holland and Belgium.

The DEA has placed tramadol into Schedule IV of the Controlled Substances Act. A number of states, including New York and Mississippi, have already scheduled this substance.

In Kenosha County, Wisconsin, a pilot program is using fingernail drug and alcohol testing as an alternative to urine sample testing. While the fingernail testing costs more, it can reveal three to six months’ worth of drug and alcohol use, so the tests can be performed less often.

Researchers at the University of Miami have found that the use of Ecstasy can lead to a potentially fatal weakening and rupture of the posterior spinal artery.

The White House released its 2014 National Drug Control Strategy. The text of the strategy can be found at this link.

On July 22, 2014, D’Juan Jones, a NAAG Summer Intern who is entering his second year at Howard Law School this fall, attended The Women and Addiction Forum, sponsored by United State Senators Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) and Rob Portman (R-OH). This forum is part of a bipartisan strategy “to identify ways to elevate and advance addiction treatment and recovery...and develop an agenda for the next Congress.” The forum’s participants included researchers, practitioners and members of Congress. Please click on the file that is listed below to view the biographies of the speakers who participated in the training. To view the notes that Mr. Jones took during the Forum, please click on this link.

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