

# Behavioral and Social Sciences: Contributions to the Opioid and Pain Crises in the United States

The NIH Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) serves to coordinate behavioral and social sciences research conducted or supported by the NIH and integrate these sciences within the larger NIH research enterprise. In response to the opioid and pain crises, OBSSR leads, coordinates or participates in several trans-NIH efforts to identify behavioral and social sciences contributions to address these crises as well as identify areas for which more research or dissemination is needed.

## OBSSR-led Events

### Meeting - Contributions of Social and Behavioral Research in Addressing the Opioid Crisis

Background: In April 2018, NIH launched the HEAL (Helping to End Addiction Long-term) Initiative, an aggressive, trans-agency effort to speed scientific solutions to stem the national opioid public health crisis. As part of this government-wide effort to address the opioid crisis, the NIH has initiated a public-private collaborative research initiative on (1) new and innovative medications and biologics to treat opioid addiction and to prevent or reverse overdose; (2) safe, effective, and non-addictive strategies to manage chronic pain; and (3) neurobiology of chronic pain.

For a complete list of HEAL activities, visit <https://go.usa.gov/xU76R>.

Cognizant of the social and behavioral influences of the opioid problem, the NIH sought to complement these prior efforts and brought together innovative experts from academia, government, and public health for a cutting-edge science meeting to identify and pursue promising opportunities for addressing the social and behavioral contributors to the opioid crisis.

On March 5-6, 2018, the OBSSR in collaboration with the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS), the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH), the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD), and the NIH Immediate Office of the Director (IMOD), hosted a meeting to discuss social and behavioral contributions to address the opioid crisis. This meeting was part of a series of NIH initiatives to help end the opioid crisis.

Invited panelists included researchers, stakeholder and advocacy group representatives, and policymakers. NIH Director Francis Collins, M.D., Ph.D., NIDA Director Nora Volkow, M.D., and OBSSR Director William T. Riley, Ph.D., provided opening remarks and led the discussions around the five panel topics: 1. Sociocultural and socioeconomic underpinnings of the crisis; 2. Behavioral and social factors preventing opioid initiation and mitigating the transition from acute to chronic opioid use; 3. Nonpharmacologic approaches to the treatment of opioid abuse and chronic pain management; 4. Overcoming barriers to prevention and treatment; and 5. Models of integrating social and behavioral approaches into clinical and medical practice.

View the meeting agenda, participant list, and video recordings (Day 1 and Day 2) on the NIH HEAL webpage: <https://go.usa.gov/xU76Q>

Following this meeting, a trans-NIH strategic planning committee was formed consisting of senior-level staff from twenty-three NIH Institutes and Centers. They are charged with the

review and prioritization of key recommendations and integrating these research priorities into current and future NIH activities (e.g. funding opportunities and HEAL proposals).