

CoNECTR NEWSLETTER

Colorado Nicotine E-Cigarettes and Tobacco Research Alliance

Issue: March, 2026

Table of Contents

- [Greetings from CoNECTR director](#)
- [Get Expert Feedback for Your Research Idea](#)
- [CoNECTR Launches Tobacco and Nicotine Interest Group](#)
- [Investigators Spotlight: Lori Crane and Nancy Asdigian](#)
- [Monitoring a Changing Tobacco Product Market in the United States](#)
- [The FDA's guidance on flavored e-cigarettes and device access restrictions](#)
- [CU Medicine Patients Get Personalized Support to Quit Nicotine](#)
- [Colorado QuitLine Offers up to \\$100 incentive](#)
- [New Webinars Offered by BHWP](#)
- [Recent Publications](#)
- [Funding Opportunities](#)

Greetings from CoNECTR Director

It feels like we skipped from winter to summer. As things heat up in Colorado, it is our pleasure to share this quarter's newsletter, with hot topics in tobacco! It was a pleasure connecting with Colorado nicotine and tobacco researchers, Drs. Sun, Elf and Romano, at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco in Baltimore. A few conference highlights for me included the impressive results of an mHealth study showing the [effectiveness of chat-based relapse prevention support for people engaged in cessation treatment](#), an early look at results of an [opt-out cessation treatment approach in a VA-based study](#) that showed really impressive treatment engagement, and some discussion of the expectation that [we'll see more heat-not-burn tobacco products in the US](#) since they were [re-launched in March 2025](#).

[Analysis of 2024 National Health Interview Survey](#) data shows US cigarette smoking prevalence has fallen below 10% for the first time since we've been recording this data, down to 9.9% from 10.8% in 2023.

This exciting news was published, not by the CDC through *MMWR*, but through *NEJM Evidence*. The author shared that [he tried to submit to CDC's MMWR and was told they did not have smoking experts to review it](#).

If you are interested in topics like these and more, scroll down to see a new opportunity to build community and connections around tobacco and nicotine focused work at CU. We're launching quarterly interest group meetings—alternating between Zoom and in-person—to share ideas, research, and conversation. Join us!

Help us to highlight your tobacco and nicotine science talks and publications! Email it to us at gina.kruse@cuanschutz.edu

Gina Kruse, MD, MS, MPH
Director of [CoNECTR](#)

[Back to Top](#)



Pictured left to right: [Eleni Romano](#), [Jessica Elf](#), [Christina Sun](#), and [Gina Kruse](#), University of Colorado investigators at the 2026 Society for Research on Nicotine & Tobacco (SRNT) Annual Meeting in Baltimore.

Stay up to date on our program

[Visit Our Website](#)

CoNECTR Vision and Mission

Vision: To facilitate innovative transdisciplinary research, in partnership with clinical care and public health, to improve health outcomes in all communities by reducing illness and death caused by tobacco and nicotine products.

Mission Statement: To cultivate innovative and impactful tobacco and nicotine research within our community of scientists, spanning disciplines from basic science to clinical and population-based research. We seek to grow a pipeline of scientists and practitioners in partnership with our community. Our work is driven by the needs of all Coloradans, with the overarching goal of reducing the harms of commercial tobacco and nicotine products and improving health across the full spectrum of our population.

ENGAGEMENT AND COLLABORATION

Refine Your Research Idea with Feedback from CoNECTR Steering Committee

To support our research affiliates, we offer Research-In-Progress (RIP) sessions with the [CoNECTR Steering Committee](#). These sessions provide feedback on research proposals at any stage of development. Our Steering Committee brings together a multidisciplinary team that includes faculty, cessation practitioners, and community advisors from grassroots organizations and local health departments.

Interested in presenting your research idea? Contact gina.kruse@cuanschutz.edu to schedule a session.

[Back to Top](#)

CoNECTR Launches Quarterly Tobacco and Nicotine Interest Group

CoNECTR is excited to launch a **Quarterly Brown Bag Tobacco and Nicotine Interest Group**, beginning **Thursday, April 30, 2026**. Meetings will provide a welcoming, informal space to learn, connect, and collaborate across the tobacco and nicotine research and practice community.

These sessions will spotlight emerging topics, encourage sharing of ideas and works-in-progress, and spark connections among researchers, practitioners, and community partners. Bring your lunch, curiosity, and questions—and leave with new insights and potential collaborators.

Meetings are scheduled for the last Thursday of April, July, October, and January, with occasional scheduling adjustments.

Upcoming meetings (12:00–1:00 PM):

- **April 30, 2026** (Zoom)
- **August 13, 2026** (*July meeting adjusted; in-person*)
- **October 29, 2026** (Zoom)
- **January 28, 2027** (in-person)

Additional details and future dates will be shared via CoNECTR communications. We hope you'll join us! For questions, contact yamila.sierra@cuanschutz.edu

[Back to Top](#)

CDPHE Tobacco Grant Program Review Committee Applications Due by April 10, 2026

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) is seeking applications to fill several key vacancies on the Tobacco Grant Program Review Committee. To apply, please submit a signed application form, current resume/CV, statement of interest, and letter of support to cdphe_A35grantreviewcommittees@state.co.us. Applications are due by April 10, 2026.

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[Back to Top](#)

INVESTIGATOR SPOTLIGHT

Lori Crane, PhD, MPH, and Nancy Asdigian, PhD

Youth Engaged Strategies for Changing Adolescent Norms! (YES-CAN!)

[Dr. Lori Crane](#) is a professor in the Department of Community & Behavioral Health, and [Dr. Nancy Asdigian](#) is a Research Assistant Professor in the Department of Community & Behavioral Health and a member of the Center for American Indian & Alaska Native Health at the Colorado School of Public Health.

Crane and Asdigian first developed and implemented the Youth Engaged Strategies for Changing Adolescent Norms! (YES-CAN!) program in 2009 with a focus on skin cancer prevention. With recent funding from the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the program expanded launching a pilot study to engage and build partnerships with young people to discourage vaping. A peer-led program, YES-CAN! supports older adolescents

in developing and delivering short narrative prevention videos and related prevention education to younger adolescents.

Learn more about YES-CAN!

- [Reducing Youth Vaping: A Pilot Test of the Peer-Led "Youth Engaged Strategies for Changing Adolescent Norms!" \(YES-CAN!\) Program](#)
- [Youth Voices Lead the Way in Vaping Prevention Through YES-CAN! Curriculum](#)



Picture credit: <https://news.cuanschutz.edu/coloradosph/youth-voices-lead-the-way-in-vaping-prevention-through-yes-can-curriculum>

[Back to Top](#)

NEWS AND POLICY

Monitoring a Changing Tobacco Product Market in the United States: Urgent Action Needed to Protect Kids from Flavored Tobacco

Truth Initiative | January 05, 2026

Monitoring a Changing Tobacco Product Market in the United States is the second annual review of nicotine market trends from the Monitoring Tobacco Product Use project. The report analyzes retail data on nicotine products sold from January 2019 to December 2024 and results from the Tobacco Epidemic Evaluation Network (TEEN+) Study, a nationally representative survey of youth and young adults aged 13-24.

[Read More](#) or [Download Report](#)

[Back to Top](#)

The FDA's guidance on flavored e-cigarettes and device access restrictions

Public Health Law Center at Mitchell Hamline School of Law

By Luke Haqq | March, 17 2026

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued a guidance this month that signaled its willingness to authorize an array of flavored e-cigarettes. The agency need not do this and would be acting well within its authority in the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act if it continued to authorize only tobacco- and menthol-flavored e-cigarettes. The guidance also envisions a future in which the vaping industry surveils and collects personal information in potentially troubling ways.

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[Back to Top](#)

CLINICAL CORNER

Thinking of Quitting Nicotine? CU Medicine Patients Get Personalized Support

Health Insights | CU Medicine

By Rose Abell | February 10, 2026

Quitting or cutting back on nicotine can feel overwhelming. CU Medicine offers a free program designed to support patients based on their individual needs.

Quitting nicotine can be one of the hardest health changes a person makes, and one of the most important. For patients who want support that is private, personalized and grounded in medical expertise, CU Medicine offers the Ambulatory Nicotine Cessation Program (ANCP).

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[Back to Top](#)

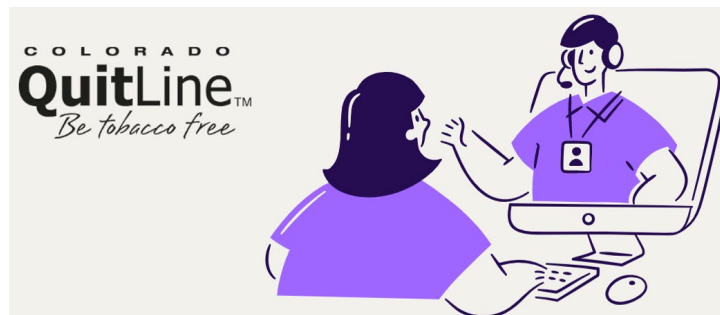
Colorado QuitLine Offers up to \$100 incentive to help adults across the state quit tobacco and nicotine products

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

Press Release | March, 04 2026

The [Colorado QuitLine](#) is offering Coloradans ages 18 and older the opportunity to earn up to \$100 for completing a coaching series designed to help them quit tobacco and nicotine products for good. Research indicates that people who attempt to quit tobacco and nicotine products with support from programs like the free Colorado QuitLine are five times more likely to succeed than those who quit without support.

[Read More](#)



Picture credit: <https://www.coloradoquits.com/how-we-can-help>

[Back to Top](#)

EVENTS AND CONFERENCES

SAVE THE DATE

Meiklejohn Annual Lecture featuring Dr. Nancy Rigotti

Division of General Internal Medicine Grand Rounds, Tuesday October 6th, 2026, 8:00 AM - 9:00 AM

Department of Medicine Grand Rounds, Wednesday October 7th, 2026 from 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM



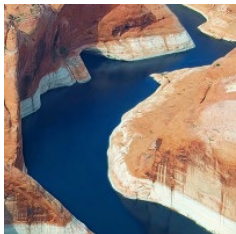
Nancy Rigotti, MD, is a Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School, Associate Chief of the Division of General Internal Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), founder and director of MGH's Tobacco Research and Treatment Center, as well as Past President of the Society for Research in Nicotine and Tobacco and Past President of the Society of General Internal Medicine. Dr. Rigotti is known for her leadership to incorporate the delivery of tobacco use treatment into routine health care delivery settings. Her research includes evaluations of tobacco control public policies, clinical trials of behavioral and pharmacologic smoking cessation treatments, and evaluation of system-level interventions for various inpatient and outpatient health care settings in the U.S. and globally. Dr. Rigotti was a member of the committee that produced the 2018 U.S. National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine Report, Public Health Consequences of Electronic Cigarettes.

To request a meeting with Dr. Rigotti, email gina.kruse@cuanschutz.edu. Meeting times are limited and will be assigned based on availability.

[Back to Top](#)

ON-DEMAND WEBINARS

New Webinars Added to BHWP Online Training Portal



Virtual Reality for Nicotine Treatment: This webinar provides an overview of virtual reality, focusing on its potential application in helping people to quit nicotine use.

Psychedelics and the Treatment of Nicotine Dependence: This webinar delves into the processes believed to drive psilocybin's therapeutic impact—from emotional regulation and brain plasticity to the role of mystical experiences—and takes a critical look at the scientific evidence that supports its promise for nicotine cessation.

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[Back to Top](#)

Review past lectures and newsletters
[Visit CoNECTR Website](#)

Upcoming Conferences

[American Society of Preventive Oncology](#) (April 12 - 14, 2026, Denver, CO)
[Society of Behavioral Medicine](#) (April 22 – 25, 2026, Chicago, IL)
[American Society of Addiction Medicine](#) (April 23-26, 2026, San Diego, CA)
[The Nicotine Summit](#) (May 8, 2026, Washinton D.C.)
[American Thoracic Society](#) (May 15 - 16, 2026, Orlando, FL)
[The European Conference on Tobacco or Health \(ECToH\)](#) (May 20 - 22, 2026, Milan, Italy)
[Society for Prevention Research](#) (May 26 -29, 2026 , Washington, DC)
[Thomas L. Petty Aspen Lung Conference](#) (June 9-12 2026, Aspen, CO)
[Society for General Internal Medicine](#) (May 6 - 9, 2026, Washington, DC)
[Behavior Genetics Association](#) (June 23-26, 2026, Amsterdam, The Netherlands)
[National Conference on Tobacco or Health](#) (June 29 – July 01, 2027, San Diego, CA)
[Public Health in the Rockies](#) (September 22 – 24, 2-26, Keystone, CO)
[American Public Health Association Annual Meeting](#) (November 1 - 4, 2026, San Antonio, TX)
[Annual Conference on the Science of Dissemination and Implementation in Health](#) (December 13-16, 2026, Oxon Hill, MD)
[Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco](#) (March 3 - 6, 2027, San Francisco, CA)
[World Conference on Lung Health \(International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease\)](#) (Next dates not yet announced)

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

To share the great work around campus we have created a search to identify the new tobacco and nicotine research published by University of Colorado researchers. Please send us additional papers to highlight, it will help us to refine our search.

Poongulali S, Rigotti NA, Kumarasamy N, Nagawa C, Faith B, **Kruse GR**. Prevalence of tobacco use in a cross-sectional survey of people initiating HIV care in a Chennai clinic. *Sci Rep*. 2026 Mar 10. doi: 10.1038/s41598-026-42986-y. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 41803214.
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/41803214/>

Gardner WM, Balte PP, Eckhardt CM, Morris JE, Bhatt SP, Couper DJ, Freedman ND, Jacobs DR, Kalhan R, Loehr LR, London SJ, Lutsey PL, Schwartz JE, White W, Yende S, **Sanchez TR**, Oelsner EC. Pipe and cigar use, lung function decline and clinical outcomes: an analysis of the NHLBI Pooled Cohorts Study. *Thorax*. 2026 Mar 3;thorax-2025-224461. doi: 10.1136/thorax-2025-224461. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 41775624. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/41775624/>

Muramoto M, Hopkins A, McCarty C, Allen A, **Dickinson LM**, **Connolly T**, **Spradley J**, **Ying J**. Effect of Helpers Stay Quit Online Training on Preventing Smoking Relapse and Personal Networks: Protocol for a Pragmatic Randomized Controlled Trial and Embedded Mixed Methods Personal Network Study. *JMIR Res Protoc*. 2026 Jan 27;15:e82140. doi: 10.2196/82140. PMID: 41591931; PMCID: PMC12840865.
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/41591931/>

Malpeddi T, Poongulali S, Shuter J, Rigotti NA, An LC, Kumarasamy N, Reddy KP, **Shergina E**, **Colborn K**, Faith B, **Sierra YL**, **Kruse GR**. Protocol for the Mobile behavioral support plus varenicline for tobacco cessation among people living with HIV in India (MoVle): A hybrid implementation-effectiveness randomized trial. *Contemp Clin Trials*. 2026 Jan;160:108179. doi: 10.1016/j.cct.2025.108179. Epub 2025 Dec 4. PMID: 41352530; PMCID: PMC12752884. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/41352530/>

Other Publications Worth Noticing

Tobacco Product Use among U.S. Adults, 2023–2024

Author: Israel Agaku, D.M.D., M.P.H., M.B.A., Ph.D.

Published March 10, 2026 | DOI: 10.1056/EVIDpha2500339 | NEJM Evidence

Analysis of 2023–2024 National Health Interview Survey data suggest that prevalence of cigarette smoking among U.S. adults declined from 10.8% of the population in 2023 to 9.9% in 2024. Use of other tobacco products, including cigars and e-cigarettes, remained unchanged, and 18.8% of adults (47.7 million) used at least one tobacco product.

[Read More](#)

Raising the standard of qualitative inquiry and reporting in nicotine and tobacco: new qualitative research submission guidelines for Nicotine & Tobacco Research

Caitlin Notley, Raising the standard of qualitative inquiry and reporting in nicotine and tobacco: new qualitative research submission guidelines for Nicotine & Tobacco Research, Nicotine & Tobacco Research, 2026;, ntag051, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ntr/ntag051>

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Use Pivot-RP to Find Funding Opportunities Relevant to You

Pivot-RP is a comprehensive funding database available to all CU Anschutz faculty and staff.

- Register for a new account at <https://pivot.proquest.com/register>
- Already have an account? Sign in at <https://pivot.proquest.com/session/login>



Other ways to learn about funding opportunities

- [Funding Focus Newsletter | CU Anschutz](#)
 - [Research Grant Process | American Cancer Society](#)
 - [Tobacco Regulatory Science Program | NIH](#)
 - [Smoking and Tobacco Use | CDC](#)
 - [Tobacco education, prevention, and cessation grant program | CDPHE](#)
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We want to hear your feedback. Let us know where you present your tobacco/nicotine research, suggest content for future newsletter or activities using the link below.

[Provide feedback here](#)

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[Back to Top](#)
