

# New CDC Funding for U-M Injury Center Probes Solutions to the Opioid Epidemic and Injuries Nationally

*Injuries are a leading cause of death — and completely preventable. To bolster research in this area, the U-M Injury Center just received new federal funding.*



An opioid overdose. A concussion on the football field. A fall by an aging parent. A motor vehicle crash by a distracted driver texting.

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These events have one thing in common: They result in injury.

“Injury is the leading cause of death for people from 1 year old to 44 years old, with opioid overdose surpassing motor vehicle deaths in our state and across the

nation,” says [Rebecca Cunningham, M.D.](#), director of the [University of Michigan Injury Center](#) and professor in the Department of Emergency Medicine and the Department of Health Behavior and Health Education.

Despite this stark statistic, the U-M Injury Center is one of only 10 nationwide funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that focuses on creating cutting-edge injury science and initiatives to prevent injuries. In addition, the centers translate proven programs to local and national communities while training the next generation of injury-prevention scientists and practitioners.

“Due to advances in the field of injury prevention, motor vehicle crash rates have fallen substantially since the 1970s,” Cunningham says. “The application of these same public health principles to other areas of injury, by multidisciplinary teams, can have a similar impact on other injuries that affect our communities daily.”

At U-M, the center focuses on prevention of prescription drug overdoses, concussion, youth violence, motor vehicle crashes, sexual violence, falls and other injuries. It just received \$2.5 million from the CDC to continue its research over the next two years.

“Like other states in the Midwest, Michigan has been significantly impacted by the opioid epidemic,” Cunningham says. “In fact, Michigan has experienced a 13 percent increase in drug overdose deaths in the past year. It has the 15th-highest rate of death due to drug overdose when compared to other U.S. states and the District of Columbia.”

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Cunningham notes the U-M Injury Center is well positioned to work with state and local partners to decrease the burden of these injuries and others in the state, and this new funding will bolster the partnership.

In addition, injuries can be costly, with a price tag of more than \$671 billion annually in costs for medical care and lost work, according to the CDC.

“And the tragic aspect of all of this is that most injuries are predictable and preventable,” Cunningham says. “Further, other injuries, such as those related to

intimate partner and peer violence, are common across the state and nation.”

The U-M Injury Center not only is a partnership with the CDC, but also brings together schools and colleges within the University of Michigan, including the Medical School, School of Public Health, College of Engineering, School of Kinesiology, School of Social Work, School of Nursing and units across campus, such as the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute. In addition, the center partners with local and state health departments and law enforcement to move best practices in injury science into the field.

The center has more than 350 members from more than 20 institutions and encourages interdisciplinary collaboration. It welcomes new [members](#).



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Cunningham adds, “We aim to reduce injury by publishing innovative research, translating research into practice, disseminating that info into actionable findings for our communities and educating our fellow practitioners and policymakers.”

The U-M Injury Center has completed several projects paving the way for injury research and prevention. These include hosting multiple conferences and trainings for stakeholders providing up-to-date information and guidance on injury best practices, developing an opioid prevention intervention tool, developing a clinical care program to prevent youth violence and collaborating with law enforcement to create a real-time opioid overdose surveillance system.

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Cunningham and members are excited for the new funding and to continue to build upon the momentum they have created over the past few years.

“We’re generating cutting-edge injury-prevention science and translating it into actions for our communities,” Cunningham says. “This grant, which leverages the strengths of a multidisciplinary team of experts and faculty across campus, will help us continue this important work and continue to educate the next generation of injury-prevention scientists, policymakers and practitioners.”

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