

Introduction to the Special Series on Driving under the Influence (DUI)

December 9, 2015

President Reagan [proclaimed](#) the first National Drunk and Drugged Driving Awareness Week during December, 1982. Back then, more than 25,000 Americans were killed each year as a result of alcohol- or drug-related crashes. President Reagan's proclamation marked the launch of sustained national efforts to cut the rate of drunk and drugged driving. When President Obama [proclaimed](#) this year's National Impaired Driving Prevention Month, he noted that drunk drivers kill approximately [10,000 Americans each year](#)— a meaningful reduction from 1982, but still 10,000 too many.

Drunk and drugged driving is a complicated problem that demands evidence-based solutions from the worlds of law enforcement, public policy, and public health. On The BASIS this month, we mark National Impaired Driving Prevention Month by reviewing four recent scientific studies related to drunk or drugged driving. First up, [The WAGER](#) reviews a study that explored whether DUI offenders with impaired decision-making skills are particularly likely to re-offend. Next, [The DRAM](#) reviews research suggesting that DUI is about more than just problem drinking; it may be a symptom of a larger pattern of risky behavior related to psychological comorbidity. [ASHES](#) examines the relationships between DUI and dependence on cannabis and nicotine dependence. Finally, [STASH](#) explores the use of psychoactive prescription drugs among persons suspected of DUI, and how the use of prescription drugs differs between DUI recidivists and those arrested only once.

Together, these studies and others suggest that people who repeatedly drive while intoxicated have problems that extend beyond substance misuse. Why is this important? Because it means that solutions to repeat DUI might have to extend beyond traditional punishments.

We will supplement these science reviews with an [editorial](#) from Dr. Sarah Nelson of the Division on Addiction on the potential role of mental health screening in the response to DUI offense. Dr. Nelson has led the Division's efforts to learn about

the complex mental health of repeat DUI offenders.

We hope you will enjoy and learn from this Special Series.

— Heather Gray