

No Time Like The Present: The BASIS Special Series on Race and Addiction

June 2, 2020



On [May 25th, 2020](#),

the dual public health threats of the [COVID-19 pandemic](#) and [racism](#) collided in the United States. Since then, activists, academics, politicians, government representatives, and citizens have supported essential steps toward [anti-racism](#) while navigating the ongoing pandemic. In brief, anti-racism refers to engaging in purposeful efforts to oppose racism, especially those efforts that might change racist policies and ideas. One pathway to anti-racism is dedicating research programs to better understand [the psychology of racism](#) in all its contexts. We are privileged to have The BASIS as a worldwide platform for our thoughts and to highlight important research that clarifies the devastating impacts of racism. Because there is no time like the present to start anti-racism work, this month The BASIS will feature a special series on race and addiction, addressing addiction-related discrimination, social determinants of health, health equity, and race.

The BASIS previously has amplified research about race and addiction. In prior special series, we have highlighted [disparities in the experience and treatment of addiction](#) and [addiction and recovery among tribal communities](#). Other standalone research reviews have addressed, for example, [marijuana use among Latino youth](#), [barriers to treatment for substance use problems](#), and [racial disparities in](#)

[opioid addiction treatment](#). Notable editorials have included thought pieces related to the role of [health equity in addiction treatment](#) and [engagement and empowerment in addiction-related public health](#). But, there is more to do.

To bring additional attention to race, discrimination, and addiction, our special series begins with [ASHES](#), and reviews research indicating that when providing outpatient psychiatric care, physicians are [less likely to screen Black patients](#) for cigarette smoking than White patients—despite [increased need for this screening among Black patients](#). Other research reviews include an issue of [STASH](#) that discusses [overdose prevention](#) among a mostly Black/Hispanic sample of people who have been released from incarceration, a [WAGER](#) that describes patterns of [gambling initiation among African American and White teens](#), and a [DRAM](#) that summarizes research about [racial discrimination as a stressor](#) that may put African Americans at risk for alcohol use and related problems.

We supplement these research reviews with editorials from our Division on Addiction team members, [Ms. Vanessa Graham](#) and [Ms. Karen Amichia](#), and editorials from experts on this issue from outside the Division, [Ms. Margaret Knapp](#) and [Dr. Sarah Matsuzaka](#), and [Mr. Malakai Hart](#) and [Dr. Carl Hart](#).

Welcome to our special series on Race and Addiction.

— Debi A. LaPlante, Ph.D., *Director, Division on Addiction at Cambridge Health Alliance, a Harvard Medical School teaching hospital; Assistant Professor, Harvard Medical School*

— Heather M. Gray, Ph.D., *Director of Academic Affairs, Division on Addiction at Cambridge Health Alliance, a Harvard Medical School teaching hospital, Instructor, Harvard Medical School*

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