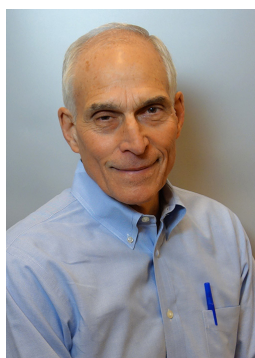


Seattle Institute for Biomedical and Clinical Research

October - December 2023

Spotlight Feature

ANDREW SAXON, MD



Andrew Saxon, MD, is an addiction psychiatrist, Director of the Center of Excellence in Substance Addiction Treatment and Education within the Mental Health Service at VA Puget Sound Health Care System (VA Puget Sound), and Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Washington (UW). Preceding his entry into psychiatry, Dr. Saxon completed an internal medicine internship and worked for four years as an emergency department physician. Subsequent to his general psychiatry residency at the UW, Dr. Saxon has nearly four decades of experience as a clinical and research addiction psychiatrist. Dr. Saxon sits on the editorial boards of the journals, *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* and *General Hospital Psychiatry*, and is Section Editor for substance use disorders for UpToDate. He is a lifetime Distinguished Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association, where he served from 2017-2019

as that organization's Chair of the Council on Addiction Psychiatry, and a Fellow of the American Society of Addiction Medicine.

Dr. Saxon's research involves phenomenology of and treatment of most substance use disorders including tobacco, cannabis, alcohol, opioids, and stimulants. He led the first study in Washington (WA) State of buprenorphine treatment for opioid use disorder which helped to demonstrate, prior to its FDA approval, that this medication could be effectively and safely prescribed in office settings by physicians in a variety of practices. He was co-PI on a large VA Cooperative Study which showed that tobacco treatment could be successfully delivered by mental health providers who were simultaneously treating posttraumatic stress disorder. With colleagues Drs. Murray Raskind and Tracy Simpson, he worked on several clinical trials showing that prazosin, an anti-adrenergic antihypertensive, is efficacious in treatment of alcohol use disorder. More recently, Dr. Saxon with collaborators from Columbia University and New York University has been examining trends in cannabis use disorder among Veterans in VA health care nationally. Rates of cannabis use disorder are increasing throughout the VA nationwide with generally slightly greater increases in states with medical or full legalization, though effects do vary by state. Amidst the opioid overdose crisis, Dr. Saxon is also actively engaged in clinical trials aimed at enhancing opioid use disorder treatment with medications in primary care settings.

Dr. Saxon's contributions extend beyond research and clinical work. He founded the UW Addiction Psychiatry Fellowship, based at VA Puget Sound, which provides opportunities for numerous graduates of the Fellowship to continue to work at VA Puget Sound as attending addiction psychiatrists. Dr. Saxon also serves on the Scientific Advisory Board for the UW's Center for Novel Therapeutics in Addiction Psychiatry (NTAP), co-directed by Drs. Nathan Sackett and Darron Smith. The Center recently secured funding from WA State to conduct a study utilizing psilocybin to treat veterans and first responders with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD). This study, directed by Dr. Sackett, will examine the safety, feasibility, and effectiveness of psilocybin to treat PTSD/AUD and will help inform WA State policymakers about best next steps pertaining to increasing access to psilocybin for WA State residents. Study outcomes will help further inform VA based researchers and clinicians on the use of psilocybin in research and clinical settings.