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\$1.16 million grant focuses on opioid epidemic in 12 EKY counties

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By MARK MAYNARD, Kentucky Today

LEXINGTON, Ky. (KT) – A \$1.16 million grant will put the spotlight on the opioid epidemic in a dozen eastern Kentucky counties.

Regional communities and several other parties have mutually agreed to conduct research on the problem that is paralyzing the area. The project has been named the Kentucky Communities and Researchers Engaging to Halt the Opioid Epidemic or CARE2HOPE.

The project focuses on the 12 counties in the Gateway Health Department District and the Kentucky River Health Department District: Rowan, Bath, Elliott, Knox, Lee, Leslie, Letcher, Menifee, Morgan, Owsley, Perry and Wolfe counties.

The study hopes to identify and build evidence on community-rooted public health responses to epidemics of opioid injecting, overdoses, hepatitis C and to imminent HIV outbreaks in rural areas.

It is a partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute on Drug Abuse, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the Appalachian Regional Commission, Dr. April Young, researcher with the University of Kentucky College of Public Health and Center on Drug and Alcohol Research, and Hannah Cooper, a co-principal investigator at Emory University.

According to the University of Kentucky, the study includes both epidemiological and qualitative research that will be conducted by Young, her colleagues in the UK Center on Drug and Alcohol Research, Emory University and other partnering institutions.

The first two years of the five-year project will focus on studying opioid use to create a better understanding and its context in the designated area.

The final three years of the study, estimated to cost about \$3.25 million, are contingent on meeting milestones in the first two years.

For information about the CARE2HOPE Project, visit www.care2hope.org (<http://www.care2hope.org>)



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