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{Kandi Hodges}

# The UT Graduate School of Medicine



Healing • Education • Discovery

# “Stopping the Opioid Crisis in the Womb”

Behind the Scenes: CNN’s story and the groundbreaking research by Dr. Craig Towers, Professor, OB/GYN



# Craig Towers, MD

Professor of OB/GYN



*“Anything that can make a better life for the mom and the baby, I enjoy answering those questions. I think I have 24 studies on going.” – Quoted in Spring 2015*

## Studies

- Fever during labor
- StrepB treatment
- Monitoring mom's heartrate  
separately from the baby
- Absorption of parabens

# Opioids: We Have a Crisis

In 2001, pain management became a priority of the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations.

New opioids were introduced to reduce pain and release pleasurable effects in the body. Unfortunately, not enough was known about the effects of long-term use of pain relievers. In 2002, 6.2 million Americans were abusing prescription drugs.

The American Society of Addiction Medicine has found women are more likely to have chronic pain, be prescribed pain relievers, and become addicted more easily than men.

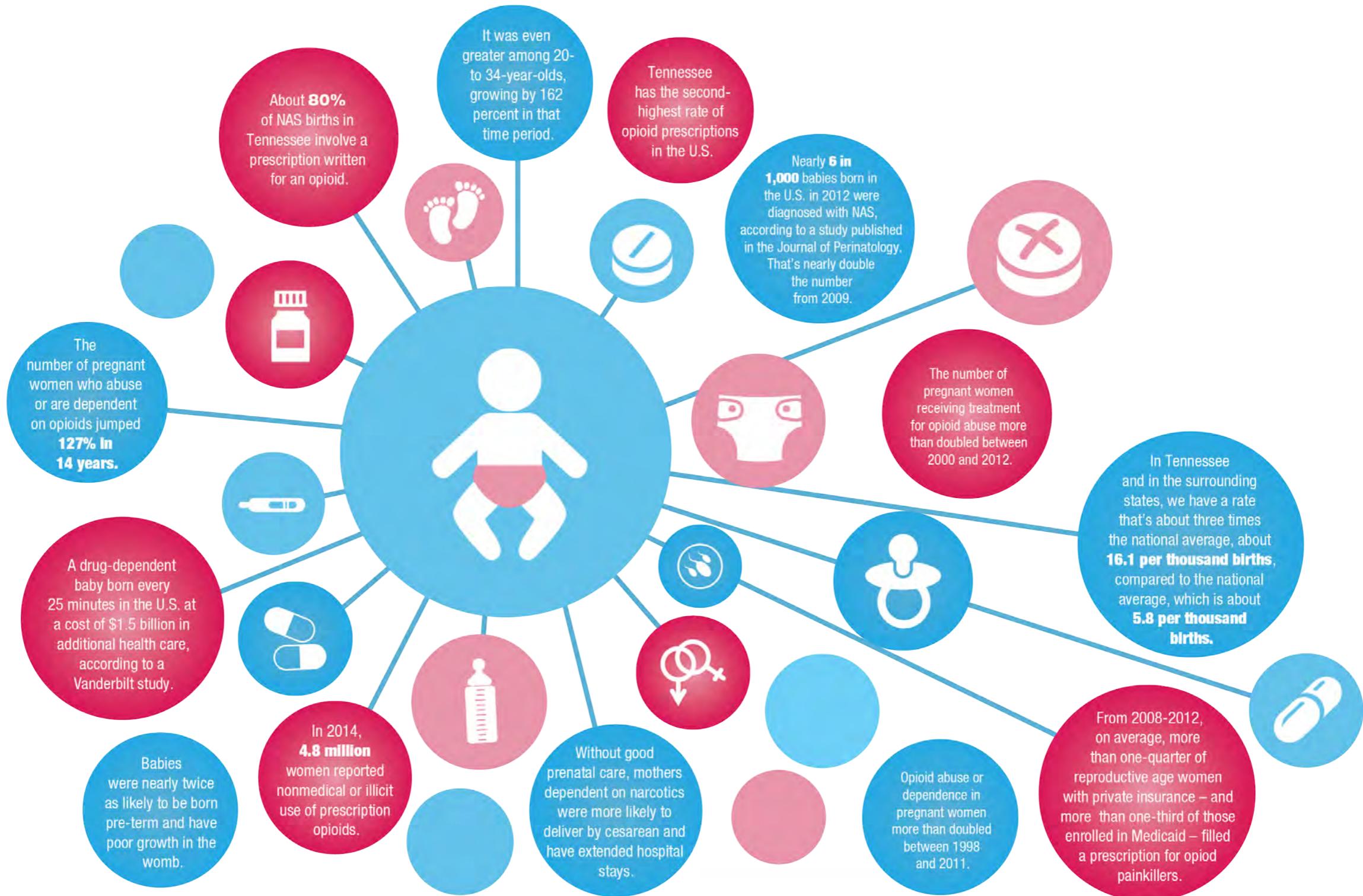
The nonmedical use of prescription drugs is the second most prevalent type of drug abuse behind marijuana in Tennessee (SAMHSA Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, 2014).

# U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy

*"Addiction is a chronic illness, not a moral failing or character flaw," said Dr. Murthy. "We have to shift how we think about addiction because, until we do that, it's going to be hard for us to end this opioid epidemic and get treatment to those who need it."*



# Opiate Abuse Facts and Figures



# What We Have Always Done

## The Official Guidelines:

***Withdrawal from opioid use during pregnancy is associated with poor neonatal outcomes***, including early preterm birth or fetal demise, and with higher relapse rates among women; robust evidence has demonstrated that maintenance therapy during pregnancy can improve outcomes.

*"Of course, opioid use during pregnancy – including MAT, prescription opioid use for pain, or non-medical opioid use – can put infants at risk of neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS). However,*

***NAS is both expected and treatable, and evidence has shown that it does not lead to long-term complications.*** Because of superior outcomes associated with MAT compared with withdrawal, ACOG continues to recommend use of MAT as the standard of care during pregnancy for women with opioid use disorders.



# Dr. Towers's Groundbreaking Research



**Dr. Towers began research to see if it was OK  
to wean pregnant mothers off opiates**

<http://www.cnn.com/2017/05/05/health/opioid-detox-during-pregnancy/index.html>

# The Results



He evaluated the detoxification of 301 opiate addicted pregnant patients, and of those patients, there was no fetal death related to the process.

# Controversial Opinions

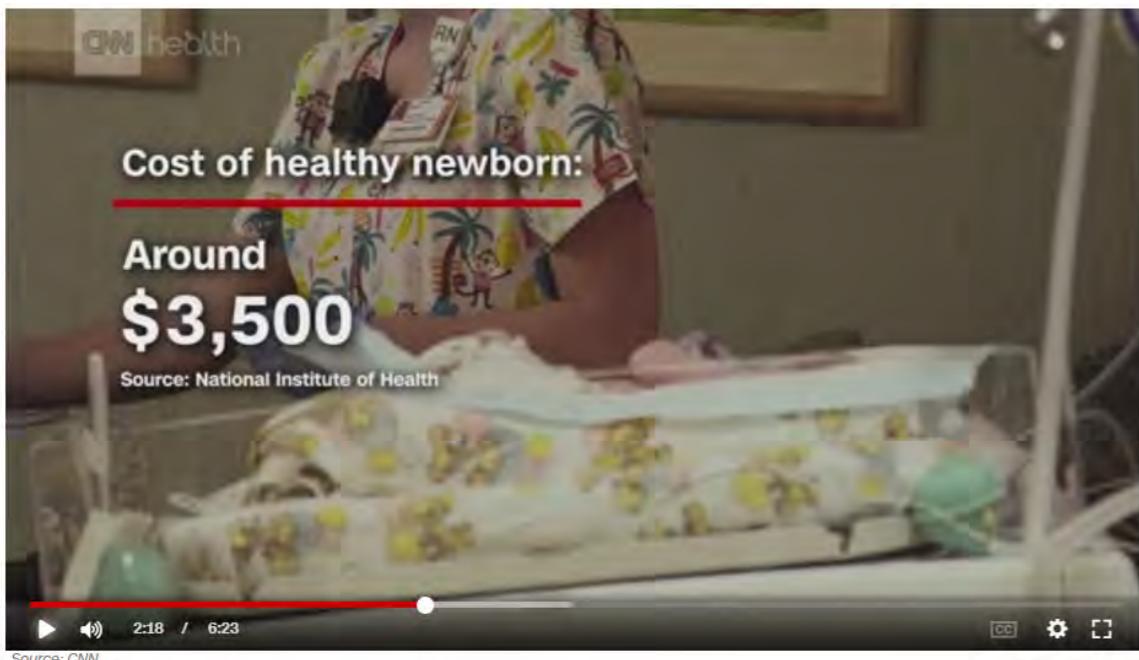
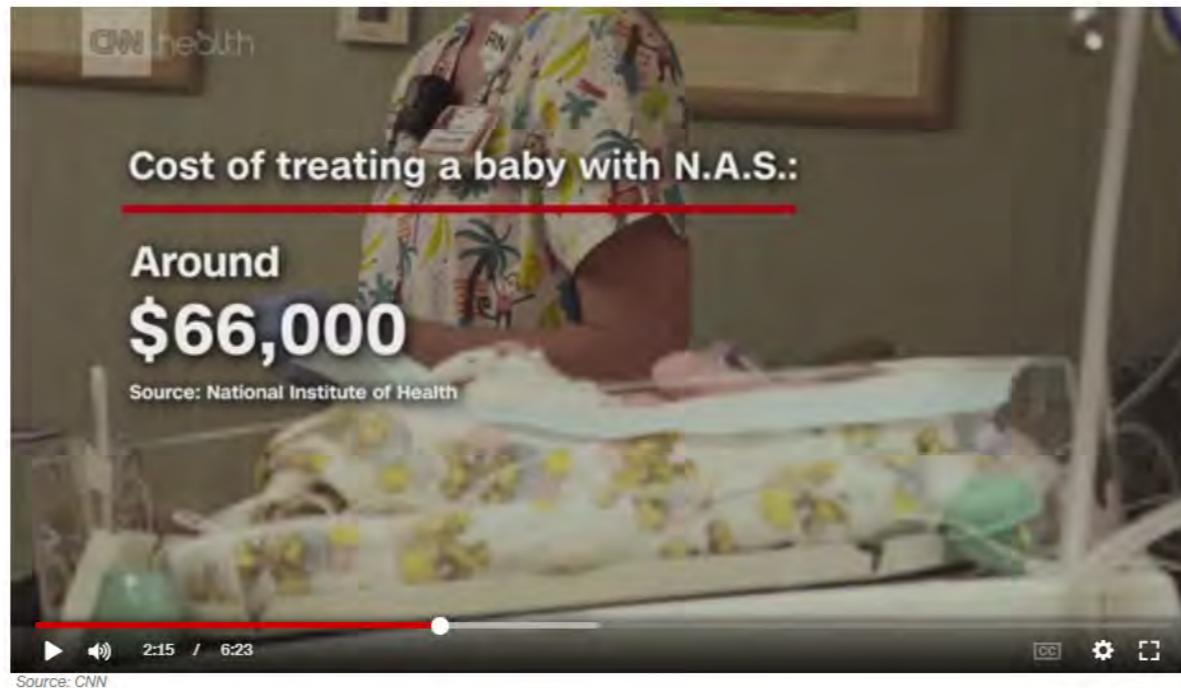
*Some experts said it would be careless -- even reckless. Even if detoxing were medically safe, they said, the risk of relapse was too great, putting newborns in danger as soon as they went home.*

***“What about the baby?”***



Source: CNN

# Detoxing: The Big Picture



# Cultural Timeliness and Relevance

## Tennessean.

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### Tennessee law that punishes mothers of drug-dependent babies to end



Joel Ebert, jebert@tennessean.com

Published 7:52 p.m. CT March 22, 2016 | Updated 12:40 p.m. CT March 23, 2016

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A controversial law that criminalizes women who give birth to drug-dependent babies will sunset later this year after a bill in front of a House committee failed Tuesday.

(Photo: File / The Tennessean)

The legislation, sponsored by Rep. Terri Lynn Weaver, R-Lancaster, failed to receive the necessary approval from the Criminal Justice subcommittee, as a result of a tie vote on the six-member committee.

Tennessee made national headlines in 2014 after lawmakers passed a law to make it the first state in the nation to penalize women who give birth to babies who test positive for narcotics.

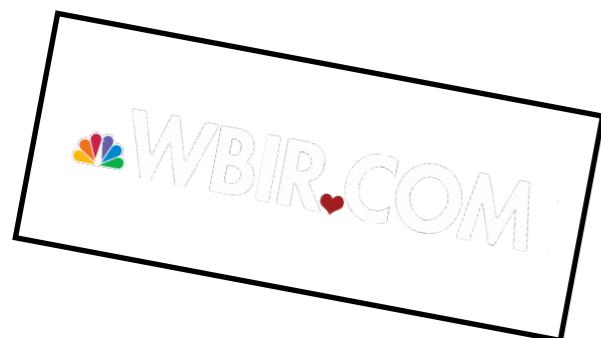
[Tennessee grapples with meth abuse during pregnancy](#)

Weaver's bill specifically sought to extend the law beyond its July 1 sunset date.

Rep. Mike Stewart said he worried the unintended consequences of the law have resulted in people being discouraged from seeking drug treatment. He said the law has even caused some women to seek an abortion.

Reiterating Stewart's point, Charles Harmuth, a doctor practicing addiction medicine in Coffee County, said, "I do feel that in my practice and also in the meetings that I attend, women do discuss having had abortions and also their fear of being prosecuted."

# Local and National News Coverage of Dr. Towers Research

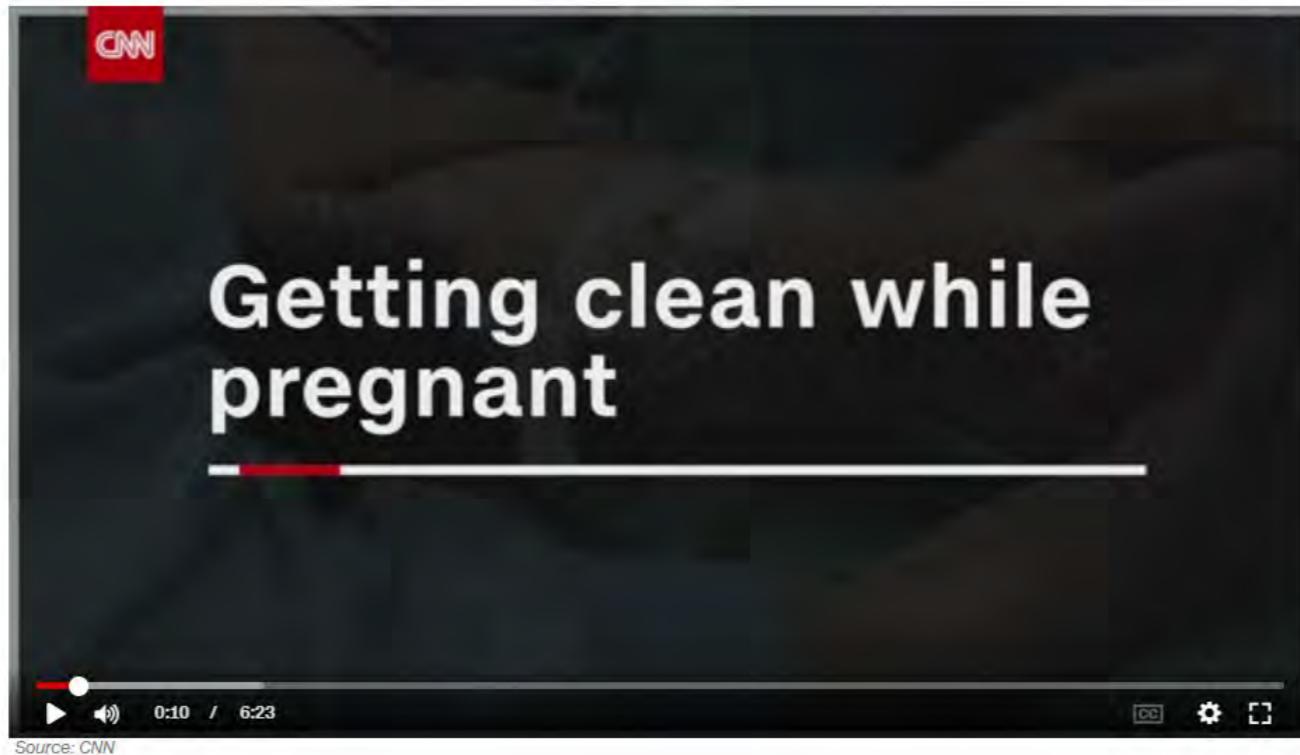


- "["Detoxing for delivery: Facing medical challenges, judgment and sometimes jail"](#)  
**Knox News Sentinel**
- "["Detoxing for delivery: Facing medical challenges, judgment and sometimes jail"](#)  
**Knoxville News Sentinel**
- "["UT Medical Center unveils research supporting opiate detox during pregnancy with no fetal death"](#)  
**KALB-TV News**
- "["Weaning pregnant women off opioids not harmful to fetus, study finds"](#)  
**Modern Healthcare**
- "["Knoxville doctor supports opiate detox during pregnancy"](#)  
**WATE**
- "["UT Medical unveils research supporting opiate detoxification during pregnancy"](#)  
**Local 8 Now**
- "["UT doctor: Detoxing pregnant moms will save babies from suffering"](#)  
**WBIR**
- "["UT Medical Center study supports opiate detox during pregnancy"](#)  
**Becker's Hospital Review**



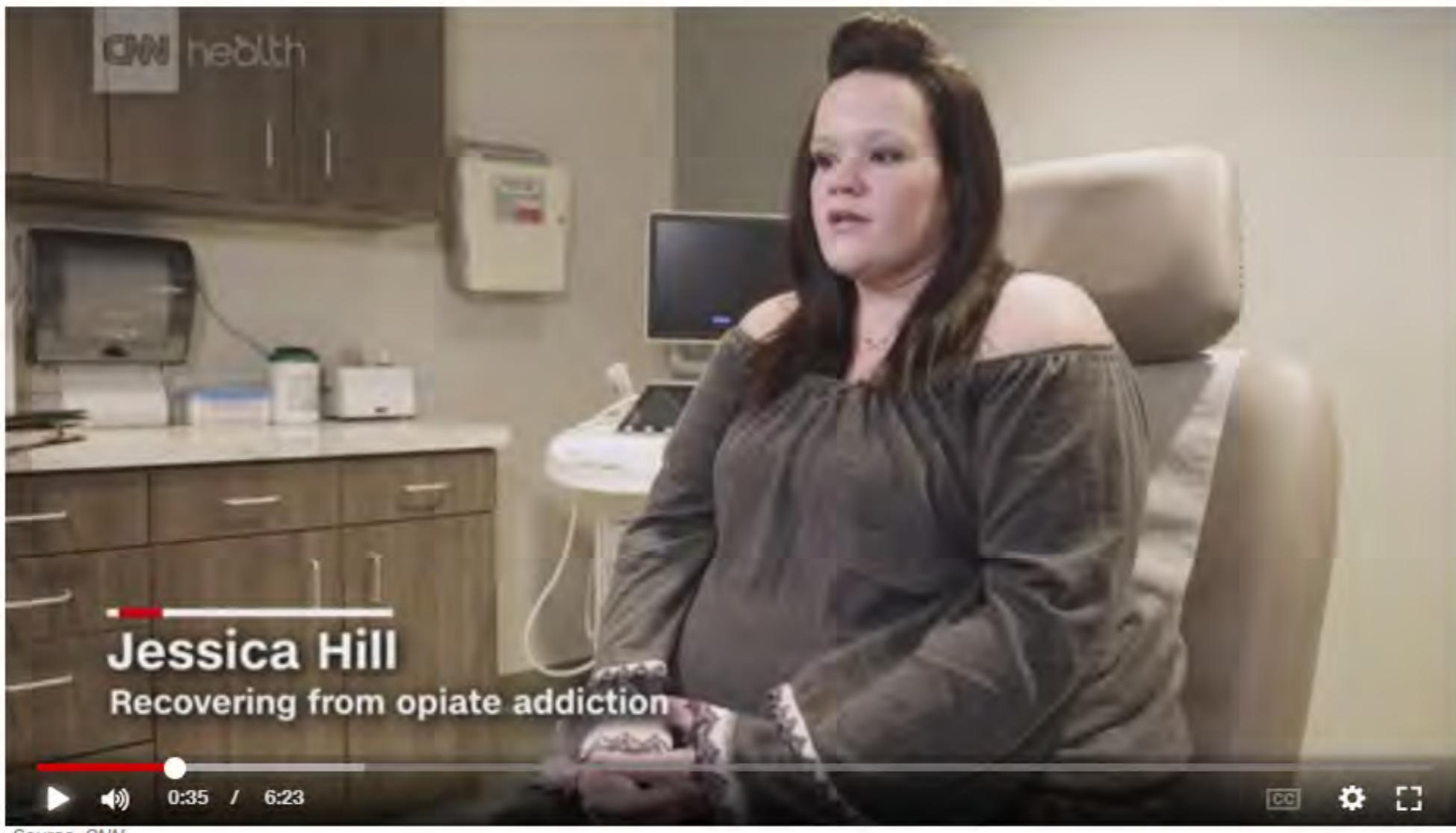


## CNN Wants to Do a Story



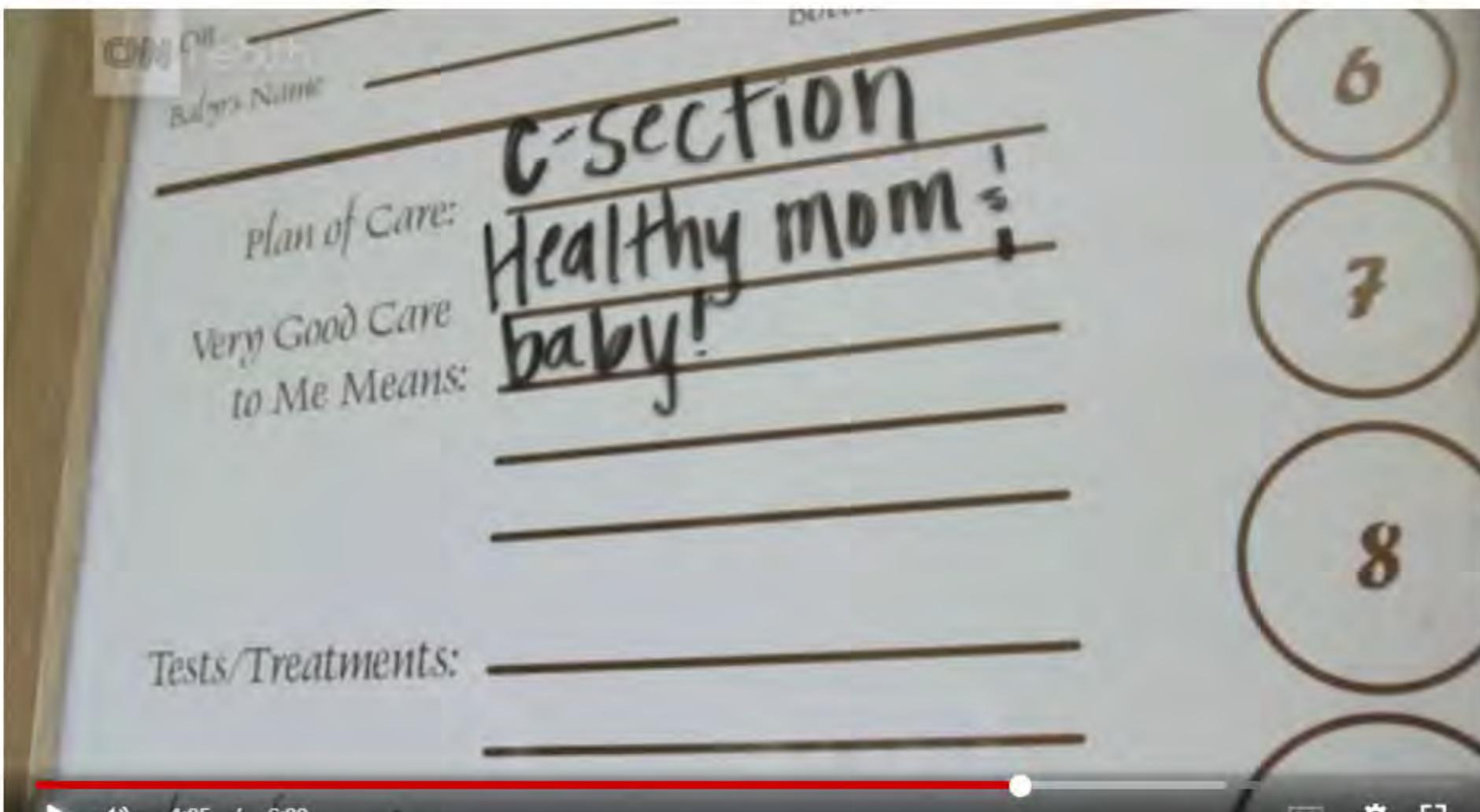
As of August 2010, CNN is available in over 100 million U.S. households. Broadcast coverage of the U.S. channel extends to over 890,000 American hotel rooms.

# Jessica's Story



Source: CNN

# Media Filming a “High Risk” Birth

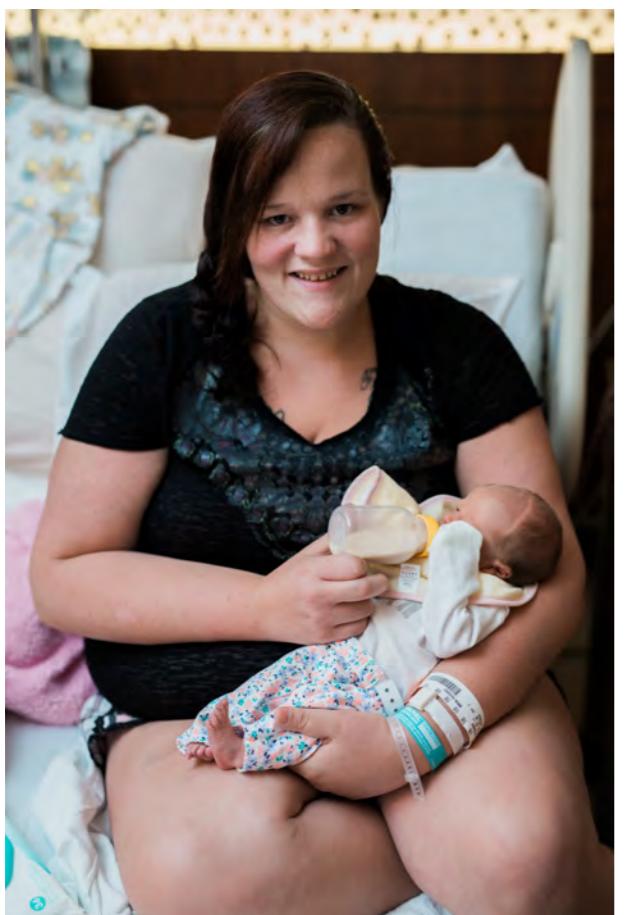


Source: CNN

# Behind the Scenes



# Mom Delivered a Healthy Baby



# Baby Goes Home with Mom and Dad



# New ACOG Recommendations

**CNN** Health » Diet + Fitness | Living Well | Parenting + Family      Live TV   U.S. Edition +   🔍   ⚙

## Experts say detoxing while pregnant can be safe

By Nadia Kounang, CNN  
Updated 10:10 PM ET, Tue July 25, 2017



Source: CNN

Getting clean while pregnant 06:23

**Story highlights**

Every 25 minutes a baby is born addicted to opioids

Detoxing during pregnancy can be done safely with medical supervision

**(CNN) —** Due to the ongoing opioid crisis plaguing the nation, the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists said Wednesday that an approach to treating babies born with addiction that was once thought to be harmful should now be considered.

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*(CNN) Due to the ongoing opioid crisis plaguing the nation, the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists said Wednesday that an approach to treating babies born with addiction that was once thought to be harmful should now be considered.*

Source: <http://www.cnn.com/2017/07/25/health/detox-opioid-pregnancy/index.html>