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Single-gender groups for women suffering from opioid use disorder: Theory and treatment

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Opioid use disorder is increasing in alarming rates for both men and women in the United States. Although studies show that men still exceed women in the prevalence of both heroin use and nonmedical prescription opioid use, as well as overdose deaths, the rate of increase of women's use may be exceeding that of men's. Group therapy has been associated with positive treatment outcomes for individuals with opioid use disorders (OUDs) and continues to be the most common form of treatment for individuals with substance use disorders (SUDs). Around the world, the majority of women receive treatment in gender-mixed

groups; however, gender differences in OUDs may suggest a need for gender-specific treatment. Current research indicates that the proportion of women represented in substance abuse treatment facilities is lower than the population prevalence of these disorders in women relative to men, with reports concluding that women are less likely to enter opioid abuse treatment programs than men. This paper discusses the unique barriers women face when they attend treatment and presents a single-gender model for groups as a way to address women's unique needs.

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