

American Medical Women's Association

March 11, 2019

Commitment Statement: Reversing the Trends in the U.S. Opioid Epidemic

The American Medical Women's Association (AMWA), the oldest multispecialty organization dedicated to advancing women in medicine and tackling public health issues that disproportionately impact women, is committed to developing and disseminating action based strategies to assist the National Academy of Medicine and its partners in reversing the trends of the U.S. opioid epidemic. Our focus will be on challenges facing women with opioid addiction, including sex and gender differences in pain perception and addiction potential in women, neonatal abstinence syndrome, and the challenges facing women with children in accessing addiction treatment.

Deaths from overdose of prescription opioid pain relievers are increasing more rapidly in women than men, with an increase of 5-fold in women compared to 3.6-fold in men between 1999 and 2010 (1). Emergency department visits for misuse of opioids increased by more than 2-fold in women between 2004 and 2010 (1). Women are more likely than men to have conditions leading to chronic pain, and research suggests that women perceive pain more intensely than men. Women are also more sensitive to the effects of opioids and become addicted at lower doses over shorter time periods. Pregnant women face the risks of neonatal abstinence syndrome in their infants. Further, women with childcare responsibilities have difficulty remaining in treatment programs.

AMWA is committed to working with the National Academy of Medicine and its partners in finding solutions to the U.S. opioid epidemic. Specifically AMWA will focus on the following:

- 1) Educating health care providers and the public about the unique aspects of opioid addiction in women, including sex differences in pain experience and opioid response, and barriers to treatment faced by women

