

## PRESS RELEASE

### Religiosity and participation in mutual-aid support groups for addiction

Randolph G. Atkins, Jr., Ph.D.<sup>1</sup> and James E. Hawdon, Ph.D.<sup>2</sup>

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Mutual-aid support groups play a vital role in substance abuse treatment in the United States. In 2005, The Walsh Group conducted a national survey of participants in mutual-aid support groups for addiction to identify key differences between participants in various recovery groups. This research was funded by a grant from the National Institute of Drug Abuse (Grant # 1 R43 DA016517-01A1). The survey was conducted with the assistance of The Center for Survey Research at the University of Virginia, Secular Organizations for Sobriety (SOS), SMART Recovery, and Women for Sobriety (WFS). Extensive data was collected from survey respondents on many aspects of recovery. This paper, the first in a planned series of papers based on this survey data, focuses on the impact of survey respondents' level of religiosity on their recovery and their participation in mutual-aid support groups.

Key findings from the survey on mutual-aid support groups discussed in this paper include:

- Active involvement in groups significantly improves the chances of remaining clean and sober, regardless of the group (SOS, SMART, WFS, 12-step) in which one participates.
- Respondents whose individual beliefs better matched those of their primary support groups showed greater levels of group participation, resulting in better outcomes as measured by increased number of days clean and sober.
- Religious respondents were more likely to actively participate in 12-Step groups and WFS, both of which have spiritual components in their programs.
- Non-religious respondents were significantly less likely to participate in 12-Step groups.
- Respondents with low levels of religiosity were more likely to actively participate in groups with secular programs, such as SOS and SMART Recovery.

This study provides more evidence that in recovery “one size does not fit all.” These results have important implications for treatment planning and implementation, indicating that matching clients to appropriate support groups according to their individual beliefs can have a positive impact on their program involvement and, ultimately, on their treatment outcomes. When participants in recovery groups feel more comfortable with the philosophies of the groups they attend, they are more likely to become actively involved in these groups, which often results in longer periods of remaining abstinent from the use of alcohol and other drugs.

\* Our special thanks go out to all of those people in recovery who shared their experiences and beliefs with us through participation in the survey.

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<sup>1</sup> The Walsh Group, 6701 Democracy Blvd., Suite 300, Bethesda, MD 20817 USA

[Corresponding author] [randy.atkins@walshgroup.org](mailto:randy.atkins@walshgroup.org)

<sup>2</sup> Department of Sociology, 654 McBryde Hall, Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, Blacksburg, VA 24061 USA