This Summer 2015 issue of the MAPS Bulletin primarily focuses on a series of updates about our research and educational projects. As we move steadily up the path toward U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)—which we currently project will take place in 2021—it’s sobering to reflect that it was 30 years ago, on July 1, 1985, that the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) criminalized MDMA. After extensive legal hearings and testimony, the DEA administrator rejected the recommendation of DEA Administrative Law Judge Francis Young, who determined that it would be in the public interest for MDMA be placed in Schedule III rather than Schedule I in order to preserve its legal therapeutic use. As it turned out, this initial scheduling of MDMA was itself illegal and subsequently voided, since the Attorney General had failed to delegate the power to criminalize new drugs on an emergency basis to the DEA administrator.

It’s now taken us 30 years since the summer of 1985, and about $5 million in donated funds, to get close to completing our international series of Phase 2 pilot studies of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for PTSD. We confidently project it will be another six years—until 2021—before MDMA-assisted psychotherapy is legally available as a prescription treatment.

I recently spoke with a new donor (an early employee of Facebook) and commented that business empires have risen in much less time than it has taken MAPS to gather just the preliminary data needed to design our pivotal Phase 3 multi-site studies of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for PTSD. It’s tragic to think of the suffering that we could have successfully treated over that period of time if the DEA had not acted so harshly and out of fear to criminalize MDMA and its legitimate uses. I wonder how many people could have been helped if the DEA had listened to Judge Young’s recommendation, whose decision (albeit ignored) made him an unsung hero of rationality and compassion at a time when drugs were being irrationally portrayed as America’s #1 national security threat.

Thirty years later, we are finally seeing public perception shifting. In the 1980s, Nancy Reagan’s “Just Say No” campaign and the Partnership for a Drug-Free America had the support of most women and mothers, who saw the criminalization of MDMA as protecting their children from its dangers. In contrast, just today (as I write this) the increasingly popular news
website VICE.com published an amusing and provocative article about “Moms Who Do Molly.” The article was about women from the rave scene who have grown up and become mothers, but who still make time for occasional MDMA experiences and consider those experiences as making them better parents.

We see more evidence for the shift in cultural attitudes towards MDMA in the September 2015 issue of the women’s magazine *Marie Claire,* which includes a remarkably positive and well-balanced feature article about MAPS’ MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for PTSD research with testimonials from three of the subjects from our Phase 2 pilot studies. Even the obligatory critical comments from drug abuse experts and defenders of Prohibition acknowledged the importance of research and the potential of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy.

Thirty years ago, it was law enforcement—police and the DEA—who led the charge to criminalize MDMA. Thirty years later, we have actually enrolled and treated a police officer with service-related PTSD in our South Carolina Phase 2 studies, as well as three firefighters (including one who was at the World Trade Center on 9/11) and 20 U.S. military veterans.

As justification for the criminalization of MDMA in 1985, DEA officials cited the claim that a single dose could cause brain damage with lasting harmful consequences, if not immediately then over time as people aged. The science behind that claim was proven to be flawed, and, well, we’ve aged and neither the functional consequences nor the threatened holes in the brain have materialized.

Instead, as you will learn in this issue of the MAPS Bulletin, what has materialized is solid and rigorously conducted research into the real risks and benefits of a range of psychedelics and marijuana for multiple clinical conditions. With continued support from MAPS donors, our research will expand until we have brought the medical uses of psychedelic psychotherapy and marijuana back into the mainstream. Together, we can help heal people and create more compassionate policies.

MAPS: Who We Are

Founded in 1986, the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit research and educational organization that develops medical, legal, and cultural contexts for people to benefit from the careful uses of psychedelics and marijuana.

MAPS furthers its mission by:

- Developing psychedelics and marijuana into prescription medicines.
- Training therapists and working to establish a network of treatment centers.
- Supporting scientific research into spirituality, creativity, and neuroscience.
- Educating the public honestly about the risks and benefits of psychedelics and marijuana.

MAPS envisions a world where psychedelics and marijuana are safely and legally available for beneficial uses, and where research is governed by rigorous scientific evaluation of their risks and benefits.

MAPS relies on the generosity of individual donors to achieve our mission. Now that research into the beneficial potential of psychedelics is again being conducted under federal guidelines, the challenge has become one of funding. No funding is currently available for this research from federal governments, pharmaceutical companies, or major foundations. That means that the future of psychedelic and marijuana research is in the hands of individual donors. Please consider making a donation today. maps.org/donate

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Treating PTSD with MDMA-Assisted Psychotherapy

Final Experimental Session Complete in Veterans Study; Preliminary Results Presented Ongoing study
Location: Charleston, South Carolina
Principal Investigator: Michael Mithoefer, M.D., with co-therapist Annie Mithoefer, B.S.N.
Estimated study budget: $1,428,000
Already raised: $1,386,000
Needed to complete this study: $42,000

On July 31, 2015, the final experimental session took place in our ongoing study of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for 24 U.S. veterans, firefighters, and police officers with treatment-resistant PTSD. “We had our last experimental session today,” reports Principal Investigator Michael Mithoefer, M.D. “It was, once again, a wonderful example of the power of MDMA-assisted therapy to bring healing, and to change the lives of people who have been suffering for years with PTSD.” The first subject was enrolled in November 2010.

Principal Investigator Michael Mithoefer, M.D., shared preliminary results and ongoing research into MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for PTSD at the American Psychiatric Association Annual Meeting in Toronto, Canada, from May 16–20, where MAPS hosted an educational booth in the exhibit hall (see full report on page 8).

Approximately half of the 24 subjects have also enrolled in our ongoing sub-study, in collaboration with researchers at the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC), of the physiological effects of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy. This sub-study is using heart rate variability (HRV) and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to explore correlations with clinical outcomes.

We anticipate that the results will be published in early 2016, after the data from this study and all of our other international Phase 2 pilot studies is submitted to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for consideration of Breakthrough Therapy status.

Goals for this study include (1) gathering evidence for the safety and effectiveness of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy in people suffering from war-related trauma; (2) comparing the effectiveness of the treatment for people with war-related trauma versus for people with trauma related to sexual abuse, assault, and other causes; (2) comparing different doses of MDMA for therapeutic effectiveness and ability to create a successful double-blind; and (3) increasing awareness and support for our work by assisting a population with mainstream public recognition.

Subject 19 Treated in Boulder Study; Subjects Interviewed in Marie Claire Ongoing study
Location: Boulder, Colorado
Principal Investigator: Marcela Ot’alora, M.A., L.P.C.
Estimated study budget: $771,000
Already raised: $716,000
Needed to complete this study: $55,000

On July 17, 2015, subject 19 out of 23 was treated in our ongoing study of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for subjects with PTSD from sexual assault, violent crime, war, natural disasters, or any other cause, taking place in Boulder, Colorado. In addition to obtaining Phase 2 data on the safety and effectiveness of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for PTSD, this study is also comparing outcomes between different combinations of male/female co-therapist teams. We expect that the final subject will be treated in October 2015. Primary outcome data is anticipated to be available in December 2015, and the final results prepared for publication in late 2016.

Two subjects from this study spoke about their experience in an in-depth feature article in the September 2015 issue of Marie Claire. “I was really in a fight for my life,” says study subject Brenda Murphy, “The fear of the stigma associated with using MDMA [in the study] was far less than the fear of continuing to feel the PTSD symptoms for the rest of my life.”

On March 25, a study participant participated in a public “Ask Me Anything” session on reddit, answering over 120 questions about her experience. “It wasn’t only the MDMA, I can’t stress that enough,” she explains. “My therapists were incredible. They’re knowledgeable, thoughtful, insightful people who helped me save my life.”

Goals for this study include (1) gathering evidence for the safety and effectiveness of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for subjects with PTSD from a variety of causes, (2) comparing different doses of MDMA for therapeutic effectiveness and ability to create a successful double-blind, (3) exploring whether using intern co-therapists can reduce costs while maintaining treatment effectiveness, and (4) training the next generation of psychedelic psychotherapists.
Fifth Subject Treated, Three More Enrolled in Israeli Study Ongoing study
Location: Beer Yaakov, Israel
Clinical Investigator: Moshe Kotler, M.D.
Estimated study budget: $509,000
Already raised: $87,000
Needed to complete this study: $422,000

On July 14, 2015, the fifth subject was treated in our ongoing Israeli study of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for PTSD. The seventh subject was enrolled on July 23, and the eighth and ninth subjects were enrolled on August 1. Led by Principal Investigator Moshe Kotler, M.D., this Phase 2 study will treat up to 10 subjects with chronic, treatment-resistant PTSD from any cause. “We are excited about the recent enrollments in our ongoing Israeli study, where we are getting promising results in a population with endemic trauma,” reports MAPS Clinical Research Scientist Berra Yazar-Klosinski, Ph.D. This study is actively seeking Israeli participants (learn more at maps.org/israel).

Goals for this study include (1) gathering evidence for the safety and effectiveness of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for subjects with PTSD mostly related to war and terrorism, (2) comparing different doses of MDMA for therapeutic effectiveness and ability to create a successful double-blind, (3) working in direct association with the Israeli Ministry of Health, and (4) exploring the use of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy in other cultural contexts.

Fifth and Sixth Subjects Treated in Canadian Study Ongoing study
Location: Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
Principal Investigators: Ingrid Pacey, M.D.
Estimated study budget: $470,000
Already raised: $46,000 + $69,000 raised by partners
Needed to complete this study: $355,000

On June 26 and July 3, 2015, the fifth and sixth subjects were treated in our ongoing Canadian study of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for PTSD. The sixth subject was enrolled on June 29. Led by Principal Investigator Ingrid Pacey, M.D., in Vancouver, B.C., this Phase 2 study is treating up to 12 subjects with chronic, treatment-resistant PTSD from sexual assault, violent crime, military service, or any other cause.

Mark Haden, Chair of the Board of Directors of MAPS Canada, reflected on the media attention the study has been receiving: “We had 15 minutes on CBC national radio, a feature article in Maclean’s (Canada’s most prominent weekly magazine), and CBC’s high-profile show “Ideas” is producing two new shows dedicated to psychedelics,” Haden writes. “MAPS Canada is not just developing a better treatment for PTSD, but also having an impact on public perception of the vast potential of psychedelic medicine.”

Goals for this study include (1) gathering evidence for the safety and effectiveness of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for subjects with PTSD from a highly skilled co-therapist team, (2) comparing different doses of MDMA for therapeutic effectiveness and ability to create a successful double-blind, and (3) initiating the first Canadian research into the potential benefits of psychedelic psychotherapy in over 40 years.

Five-Day MDMA-Assisted Psychotherapy Training Held in UK Training Program
Location: Charleston, South Carolina
Principal Investigator: Michael Mitohoefer, M.D., with co-therapist Annie Mitohoefer, B.S.N.

In December 2014, MAPS held a five-day training in Buckinghamshire, UK, for researchers who will be involved in upcoming clinical studies of the therapeutic use of MDMA. The training included 30 neuroscientists, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and others from Australia, Brazil, Germany, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, and the United States. The training was primarily organized for the Cardiff University team that will be conducting an upcoming fMRI study of the acute effects of MDMA on the brains of UK veterans with PTSD (study funded by MAPS, the Beckley Foundation, and Anton Bilton). The purpose of the training was to provide researchers with the knowledge needed to conduct future studies of MDMA-assisted therapies for PTSD, couples counseling, life-threatening illness anxiety, and hospice care; and to develop a model for training the many new therapists who will be needed for our Phase 3 studies of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for PTSD. The training was led by Michael Mitohoefer, M.D., and Annie Mitohoefer, B.S.N., at the gorgeous Tyringham Hall, the use of which was generously donated by Anton Bilton. “Beyond the important therapeutic training we’re all so passionate about, living together for five days has really created a sense of a community,” reported MAPS Research and Advocacy Manager Natalie Ginsberg. “Everyone here believes so deeply in the work and it’s been really special having researchers with such different backgrounds engaging in conversation.”

Are you interested in learning more about being a Phase 3 MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for PTSD researcher? Contact us at askMAPS@maps.org.
**MAPS and UK Researchers Plan Brain Imaging Study of MDMA and PTSD**

*Upcoming study*

**Location:** Cardiff University, UK  
**Principal Investigator:** Prof. Jon Bisson  
**Study Lead:** Ben Sessa, M.D.  
Funded in part by MAPS.

“Hooking up with the neuroimaging expertise of Robin Carhart-Harris, Ph.D., and Dr. David Nutt at Imperial College London and Richard Wises’ fMRI department at Cardiff University, we designed a study that looks primarily at the neurobiological mechanisms behind MDMA’s effects on the core features of PTSD. There have already been neuroimaging studies on patients with PTSD and on healthy people taking MDMA, but ours will be the first time fMRI has looked specifically at patients with PTSD under the direct effect of MDMA. This study will be funded by MAPS, Beckley Foundation, and an anonymous donor. There is no therapeutic component to the study, but subjects will be able to request therapeutic support if they feel it is necessary since for most of their MDMA experience they will not be in the scanner. This study will also explore MDMA’s potential beneficial effects without delivering formal therapy.” —Dr. Ben Sessa MBBS (MD) BSc MRCPsych, Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist in Substance Misuse and Psychedelic Researcher, Bristol and Cardiff, UK.

### MDMA-Assisted Therapy for Social Anxiety in Autistic Adults

**Eighth Subject Treated; Site Passes**

**Routine DEA Inspection**

*Ongoing study*

**Location:** Los Angeles, California  
**Principal Investigators:** Charles Grob, M.D., and Alicia Danforth, Ph.D.  
**Estimated study budget:** $336,000  
**Already raised:** $12,715 raised + $15,000 raised by partners  
**Needed to complete this study:** $308,285

On July 25, 2015, the eighth subject was treated in our ongoing study of MDMA-assisted therapy for social anxiety in 12 adults on the autism spectrum. As of July 30, five subjects have completed their six-month follow-up visit. This study is exploring whether MDMA combined with therapy can enhance functional skills and quality of life in autistic adults with social anxiety. Sponsored by MAPS, this is a collaborative study between MAPS, the Los Angeles Biomedical Research Institute at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, and researchers at Stanford University.

On July 2, the study site passed a routine inspection by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). “The DEA visit was a routine inspection, and the process went quite smoothly,” reports Principal Investigator Charles Grob, M.D. “Recruitment is going well, and we are looking forward to conducting several treatment sessions over the next month.”

In May 2015, MAPS participated in Silicon Valley Gives Day, in which 100 donors contributed $11,715 for MDMA biomarker research at Stanford University in association with this study, where researchers will analyze blood plasma concentrations of several hormones hypothesized to be involved in the therapeutic effectiveness of MDMA when combined with therapy. “The interesting thing about MDMA and similar drugs...is that they do have multi-targeted approaches,” says Stanford University researcher Dean Carson, Ph.D. “We’re talking about the effects of serotonin, dopamine, oxytocin, cortisol, vasopressin...It’s really a systems-level approach that I think is very important in the treatment of psychiatric disorders.”

Goals for this study include (1) gathering evidence for the safety and effectiveness of MDMA-assisted therapy for autistic adults diagnosed with social anxiety, (2) determining if additional studies in this area are warranted, and (3) initiating a new program of research into a possible beneficial use of MDMA building on collected case accounts.

### MDMA-Assisted Psychotherapy for Anxiety Associated with Life-Threatening Illness

**Study Initiated; First Two Subjects Treated; Four Enrolled**

*Ongoing study*

**Location:** Marin, California  
**Principal Investigators:** Phil Wolfson, M.D.  
**Estimated study budget:** $608,000  
**Already raised:** $187,000  
**Needed to complete this study:** $421,000

On July 2 and July 6, 2015, the first two subjects were treated in our ongoing study of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for anxiety associated with life-threatening illness. On July 2 and July 6, 2015, the first two subjects were treated in our ongoing study of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for anxiety associated with life-threatening illness. The fourth subject was enrolled on June 18. Led by Principal Investigator Phil Wolfson, M.D., with co-therapist Julane Andries, LMFT, in Marin, Calif., this study will treat 18 subjects suffering from anxiety related to a life-threatening disease that is either ongoing or in remission with a possibility of recurrence. “I feel
completed pilot study found positive trends in the reduction of anxiety following two LSD-assisted psychotherapy sessions, and indicated that LSD-assisted psychotherapy can be safely administered in these subjects. The long-term results, showed lasting reductions in anxiety and increases in quality life for participants one year after receiving two LSD-assisted psychotherapy sessions. This was the first study of the therapeutic use of LSD in humans in over 40 years.

Ibogaine-Assisted Therapy for Drug Addiction

Final Subject Enrolled in New Zealand Ibogaine Study

Ongoing study
Location: New Zealand
Principal Investigator: Geoff Noller, Ph.D.
Donations are needed to support ibogaine research.
Investigator Geoff Noller, Ph.D., has collected follow-up data from subjects undergoing treatment at an independent ibogaine center in New Zealand. Data from this study will be compared to the results of our completed observational study in Mexico.

Goals for this study include (1) gathering preliminary evidence about the safety and potential benefits of ibogaine-assisted therapy for opiate addiction, (2) supplementing the data from our completed observational ibogaine study in Mexico, and (3) initiating and encouraging psychedelic research in New Zealand.

Data Entry Completed in Mexico Ibogaine Study

Study completed
Location: Mexico
Principal Investigator: Thomas Kingsley Brown, Ph.D.
This study is complete and has been fully funded.

The results of our completed study of ibogaine-assisted therapy for addiction in Mexico are being prepared for publication in a peer-reviewed scientific journal. In this study, Principal Investigator Thomas Kingsley Brown, Ph.D., observed the long-term effects of ibogaine treatment for individuals undergoing treatment for opioid dependence at an independent clinic in Mexico.

LSD-Assisted Psychotherapy for Anxiety Associated with Life-Threatening Illness

Switzerland: Qualitative Results Published, Showing Lasting Benefits

Study completed
Location: Solothurn, Switzerland
Principal Investigator: Peter Gasser, M.D.
This study is complete and has been fully funded.

On November 11, 2014, the peer-reviewed Journal of Psychopharmacology published a paper describing the results of a qualitative study of subjects in our completed Swiss Phase 2 pilot study of LSD-assisted psychotherapy for 12 subjects with anxiety associated with advanced-stage illness. A March 2014 paper in the Journal of Mental and Nervous Disease about our
Medical Marijuana Research

Johns Hopkins IRB Conditionally Approves Study; NIDA Provides Marijuana Cost/Availability Information

Study in development

Location: Baltimore, Md., and Phoenix, Ariz.

Coordinating Principal Investigator: Marcel Bonn-Miller, Ph.D. (University of Pennsylvania)

Co-Investigators/Site Principal Investigators: Sue Sisley, M.D. (private practice) and Ryan Vandrey, Ph.D. (Johns Hopkins University)

Co-Investigator: Paula Riggs, M.D. (University of Colorado)

Estimated study budget: $2,156,000

Already raised: $2,156,000 grant awarded by the State of Colorado

On August 18, 2015, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Johns Hopkins University granted conditional approval of the protocol for our planned study of smoked marijuana for symptoms of PTSD in 76 U.S. veterans. The conditional approval required the addition of several safety-related revisions, which we have accepted. We have also requested that the FDA remove the clinical hold which was placed on the study pending the Johns Hopkins IRB approval.

On March 31, the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) provided MAPS with information about the cost and availability of marijuana for the study. It took over a year for NIDA to provide this information after MAPS received our first approval from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to purchase marijuana from NIDA in March 2014. The protocol was amended for our successful grant to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, which awarded more than $2.1 million to MAPS for the study. The revised protocol includes an additional research site at Johns Hopkins University led by Co-Investigator/Site Principal Investigator (PI) Ryan Vandrey, Ph.D.; a private practice site for Co-Investigator/Site PI Sue Sisley, M.D.; the addition of Marcel O. Bonn-Miller, Ph.D., as Coordinating PI; and the addition of Co-Investigator Paula Riggs, M.D., to help ensure scientific integrity for the study.

Obama Administration Eliminates PHS Review for Marijuana Research

On June 22, 2015, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced that it had eliminated the redundant Public Health Service (PHS) review process for federally regulated marijuana research, removing a significant barrier to privately funded medical marijuana research. The Department acknowledged that “HHS is aware that this committee review is perceived to be an obstacle to non-federally funded research... The department expects the action announced will help facilitate further research.”

Since 1999, researchers seeking to study marijuana needed to obtain permission from PHS to purchase marijuana from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), which maintains a monopoly on the supply of marijuana for research in the U.S. Now, researchers with Food and Drug Administration (FDA) clearance can request marijuana directly from NIDA without the additional PHS review process. MAPS is now working with Prof. Lyle Craker to prepare a new request asking the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) for permission to further open doors for medical marijuana research by opening a growing facility at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

“We’re hoping the overall political environment has shifted enough where we will actually get permission from the DEA to start this farm and then we won’t have to go through NIDA at all,” Brad Burge of MAPS told U.S. News and World Report. “It’s a great opportunity for the Obama administration to show it’s progressive on marijuana issues. We’re pretty hopeful.”

Events Calendar
maps.org/events
**Report:** American Psychiatric Association Meeting

**BRAD BURGE, MAPS Director of Communications and Marketing**

The Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) was proud to participate in the American Psychiatric Association’s 168th annual meeting in Toronto, Canada, which took place from May 16–20, 2015. The 2015 APA Annual Meeting was the largest and most mainstream professional scientific conference where MAPS has ever had an official presence.

This year’s conference featured a special symposium on “Novel Psychopharmacological Therapies for Psychiatric Disorders: MDMA and Psilocybin,” chaired by MDMA researcher Michael Mithoefer, M.D., and psychiatrist Timothy Brewerton, M.D. The symposium included presentations from Roland Griffiths, Ph.D. (“Psilocybin, Mystical-Type Experiences, and the Treatment of Symptoms of Anxiety and Depression In Patients With a Life-Threatening Cancer Diagnosis”); Michael Bogenschutz, M.D. (“Psilocybin-Assisted Treatment for Alcohol Dependence”); Charles Grob, M.D. (“MDMA Treatment of Social Anxiety in Adults on the Autism Spectrum”); Matthew Johnson, Ph.D. (“Psilocybin as an Adjunct to Tobacco Smoking Cessation Treatment”), and Michael Mithoefer, M.D. (“MDMA-Assisted Psychotherapy: A Promising Treatment for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder”). Both Michael Mithoefer and Charles Grob are working on ongoing MAPS-sponsored studies. Every seat in the room was filled for the duration of the session, with many people standing, and the panelists received more curious, well-informed questions than they could answer in the time allowed.

To complement the academic symposium and provide another avenue for conference attendees—about 10,000 practicing psychiatrists, residents, and others working in mental health treatment—to learn about psychedelic therapy research, MAPS also took the opportunity to host an informational booth in the exhibitor hall. The booth was staffed by Brad Burge (MAPS Director of Communications and Marketing) and Natalie Ginsberg (MAPS Policy and Advocacy Manager), with support from volunteers Cole Marta, M.D., and Wesley Ryan, M.D., as well as from Michael Mithoefer, Charlie Grob, and Rick Doblin, Ph.D. (MAPS Founder and Executive Director). MAPS stood out as one of only two non-profits in the exhibitor hall, in the midst of countless marketing booths staffed by representatives of major for-profit pharmaceutical companies. Many of these other companies went to great lengths and paid tens of thousands of dollars to create interactive, multisensory exhibits; one even had a live painter illuminated by LED lights. The MAPS exhibit, by contrast, was information-focused with no bells and whistles; it occurred to me that the most effective tools might require the least decoration.

In 2013, we hosted an exhibit booth at the U.S. San Diego Psychiatric and Mental Health Congress in 2013. At that time, we were wary that mainstream psychiatrists might be resistant to the word “psychedelic,” so the signage, brochures, and other materials we brought put the treatment first: “Treating PTSD with MDMA-Assisted Psychotherapy” rather than “Psychedelic Therapy.” Since cutting through fear and introducing clinical practitioners to psychedelic therapy is a vital part of our mission, we changed our strategy for APA 2015. Rather than hiding the word “psychedelic,” we put it right out in front, designing new brochures focused on our psychedelic clinical research program, and displaying our professional MAPS banners to explicitly describe our research and mission.

While encouraging research results and increasingly balanced media coverage are helping more people realize the beneficial potentials of psychedelics and marijuana, we still sometimes encounter resistance when broaching the subject of psychedelic science. (That’s certainly to be expected, and it’s my job—and my passion—to seek out points of resistance and help open up spaces for healing and acceptance.) We had high hopes for a positive reception at APA 2015, and we were pleasantly surprised. Rather than resistance, what we received was curiosity, educated questions, healthy skepticism, and several entertaining double takes as people encountered the booth. Many practicing psychiatrists expressed their dismay at how many medications they prescribe, and at how many of their patients fail to respond to currently approved drugs; many of them were also visibly encouraged by the idea of psychedelic therapy requiring far fewer administrations, and addressing the root cause of PTSD rather than simply covering up the symptoms.

One of the first attendees to eagerly approach the MAPS booth was a young psychiatrist interested in developing a study of psilocybin and/or MDMA-assisted psychotherapy at the rural Texas hospital where he recently began working. We also met the director of clinical research at a major hospital in Maryland, who expressed interest in hosting a lecture series for hospital doctors, staff, and researchers. We easily engaged with the younger generation attendees, many of them just beginning their clinical careers, including young psychiatrists, residents, and students. It became apparent that the majority of men and women practicing medicine under the age
of 40 are curious, and even excited, about psychedelic research and therapy, as they are beginning their careers during a time when our culture is starting to recognize the vital need for new approaches to psychiatric treatment, and to look at psychedelics and marijuana from the perspective of science rather than stigma.

We also saw significant excitement for our work among older attendees—men and women who were already working with psychedelics when they were criminalized in the 1970s and decades following. One was a pair of clinicians who were at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Institute with psychedelic therapy pioneer Stanislav Grof in the 1970s. I also spoke with one attendee in his 70s who told me about his fascinating early work studying the psychoactive effects of various psychedelics, including psilocybin and mescaline. He had been forced to abandon his research and his academic appointment in the 1970s due to the government lockdown on psychedelics and the War on Drugs; he told me he had been literally traumatized by his experience of being threatened in his home by federal agents.

“I can see in your eyes that you believe in what you’re promoting here,” said one psychiatrist in his early 80s. Then, gesturing to the for-profit displays filling the exhibit hall: “That makes you different from the rest of these guys.”

Another group that was curious to learn more about our work were those treating veterans and active duty military personnel. Rick Doblin and I had an excellent conversation with a Special Forces psychiatrist based in Hawaii, who shared her thoughts on how military culture may ultimately embrace the use of psychedelic therapies for treating active duty personnel. One experienced Veterans Affairs psychiatrist was skeptical, and impressed us with her openness, willingness to engage in dialogue, and interest in taking home a few of our publications.

Through our conversations with people at APA 2015 and other events, we have learned that MAPS is not just educating medical practitioners and the broader public about psychedelic therapy research. Our work is bigger than spreading awareness about the benefits and risks of psychedelics and marijuana. We also need to educate people about the importance of psychotherapy—rather than drugs alone—for mental health research and treatment, and we need to educate people about the effects of PTSD on individuals, families, and our society at large. We need to encourage diversity among the field of researchers and therapists, and ensure that minority and low-income communities have access to these treatments when they become legally available. We’re making immense progress, but we still have a lot more work to do.

Here are several talking points that I’ve found useful when introducing professional mental health practitioners to psychedelic therapy research:

1. Most currently approved drug-based treatments must be taken every day (often for years), can have serious side effects, and often still do not work for many patients. Psychedelic psychotherapy involves a very limited number of doses—usually two or three—and is always combined with psychotherapy.

2. Currently approved pharmaceutical treatments are only approved to address the symptoms of mental illness, while psychedelic therapy seeks to address the root cause. In the case of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for PTSD, the root cause is the individual’s difficult relationship with their traumatic memories.

3. MAPS is a non-profit pharmaceutical company working closely with the FDA, DEA, and other U.S. and international regulatory agencies to develop MDMA-assisted psychotherapy into a legal prescription treatment for PTSD by 2021.

The unprecedented increase we are witnessing in the acceptability of psychedelics as healing and spiritual tools was highlighted at the end of the conference, when APA President Paul Summergrad, M.D., spoke with Ram Dass, Ph.D., in a pre-recorded interview about the rich connections between psychology, psychiatry, and spiritual experiences. During the interview, Summergrad acknowledged that his decision to become a psychiatrist was influenced by an LSD experience he had at the age of 19. Then, current National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) director Nora Volkow, M.D., gave an address about how her understanding of addiction is based in her own personal family history.

The language of mainstream pharmaceutical marketing is still (by and large) infected by rhetorics of shame, separation, and profit, but that is not the essence of psychiatry. Something is starting to shift, as seen in the new APA tagline, unveiled at the 2015 annual meeting: “Psychiatry: Integrating Body and Mind, Heart and Soul.” As we—together—take the next steps towards making MDMA-assisted psychotherapy a legal treatment for PTSD, we are helping reintegrate psychedelic science back into psychiatry. We are starting to translate the healing experiences that psychedelics, used carefully, can provide into a language mainstream medicine can understand. 😊
Psychedelic Harm Reduction

The Zendo Project

This year, millions of people will use psychedelics outside of supervised medical contexts. It is not uncommon for psychedelic users to have difficult psychedelic experiences, such as due to taking too much or being in a challenging environment or emotional state. As part of our broader mission to educate the public honestly about the risks and benefits of psychedelic drugs, and to minimize the harms associated with their non-medical use, we started the Zendo Project.

The Zendo Project is an onsite harm reduction service providing tranquil space, water, and compassionate care for individuals having difficult psychedelic experiences. The mission of the Zendo Project is to provide a supportive space for guests undergoing difficult psychedelic experiences or other psychological challenges to:

- Transform difficult experiences into opportunities for learning and personal growth
- Reduce the number of psychiatric hospitalizations and arrests
- Create an environment where volunteers can work alongside one another to improve their harm reduction skills and receive training and feedback
- Demonstrate that safe, productive psychedelic experiences are possible without the need for law enforcement-based prohibitionist policies.

MAPS’ harm reduction program has expanded since its reestablishment in 2012, and now has a presence at five major events: Burning Man (Black Rock City, Nevada), Envision (Costa Rica), AfrikaBurn (South Africa), Bicycle Day (San Francisco, CA), and Lightning in a Bottle (Bradley, CA). Trained volunteers offer compassionate support to individuals having a difficult psychedelic experience, in order to reduce the number of drug-related hospitalizations and arrests. Since 2012, we have assisted over 700 guests and trained 500 volunteers. Zendo coordinators also offer in-person and remote trainings to groups and individuals who seek to learn more about psychedelic harm reduction.
As we build deeper relationships with various festival organizers, our model has become an integral part of these five events. Each year we continue to work more closely alongside medical staff and are seeing more cooperation with law enforcement and security.

Zendo Project Report: Crowdfunding Campaign Raises $69,406 to Expand Festival Services

From June 23 through July 24, 2015, 437 individual donors in 32 countries gave $69,406 to expand the Zendo Project’s psychedelic harm reduction services at festivals and events worldwide. The contributions we received will help us to (1) design and build a brand new Zendo structure from recycled cardboard, (2) train more volunteers, and (3) bring the Zendo Project to more events worldwide. The Indiegogo crowdfunding campaign far exceeded our $50,000 goal, and included an anonymous $10,000 matching gift, a $10,000 gift from Dr. Bronner’s Magic Soaps, a $10,000 gift from Britt Selvitelle, and a $10,000 gift from another anonymous donor (some of these gifts were not processed through Indiegogo and therefore do not appear in the campaign total). The Zendo Project received significant news coverage in Fest300, Festival Insights, Care2, Playboy, and other media. The campaign also helped expand public education about psychedelic harm reduction, with over 22,000 campaign page visits, 2,600 referrals, and 70% new donors. Additionally, on July 15, we hosted a reddit “Ask Me Anything” session, generating over 88 comments and responses.

Support the Zendo Project by signing up for our newsletter (maps.org/zendo) and making a donation today (maps.org/donate).

The Zendo Project is sponsored by the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS). The original Zendo structure was donated by Vanja Palmers as a gift to celebrate MAPS’ 20th anniversary in 2006.

4 Principles of Psychedelic Harm Reduction

- **Safe space**: If someone is having a challenging experience try to move them into a comfortable, warm, and calm environment.
- **Sitting, not guiding**: Be a calm meditative presence of acceptance, compassion, and caring. Promote feelings of trust and security. Let the person’s unfolding experience be the guide.
- **Talk through, not down**: Without distracting from the experience, help the person connect with what they are feeling.
- **Difficult is not bad**: Challenging experiences can wind up being our most valuable, and may lead to learning and growth.
MAPS in the Media

The Agony and the Ecstasy by Kelley McMillan
August 17, 2015. Marie Claire highlights several women’s experiences of receiving MDMA-assisted psychotherapy as a treatment for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) within MAPS’ clinical research. The report investigates how current PTSD treatments are not adequately addressing the growing rate of PTSD, and explores the science and history of MDMA. “I spent 35 years suicidal, and I’m not anymore, because of the MDMA and two really skilled therapists,” explains Brenda, a study participant in MAPS’ clinical research.

Ecstasy Therapy Approved for Trial in Marin County by Don Lattin
May 24, 2015. The San Francisco Chronicle features a front-page investigative report about MAPS’ ongoing clinical study of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy to treat people with anxiety associated with life-threatening illness in Marin, Calif. “It’s a really interesting and a very powerful new approach,” explains Dr. Thomas Insel, director of the National Institute of Mental Health. “It’s not just taking MDMA. It’s taking it in the context of a treatment that involves improved insight and increased skills and using this in the broader context of psychotherapy.”

Ex-Marine Sees Dramatic Drop in Symptoms After Party Drug-Therapy by Don Lattin
May 24, 2015. The San Francisco Chronicle reports on MAPS’ ongoing research into MDMA-assisted psychotherapy as a treatment for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), telling the story of retired Marine Nigel McCoury’s recovery from PTSD after participating in a clinical study. “The basic idea is that the drug somehow helps you in the context of psychotherapy to learn things or feel things that you otherwise wouldn’t,” explains Dr. Paula Schnurr, executive director of the Veterans Affairs’ National Center for PTSD. “So I can see how people would feel this is a transformational experience.”

Major Pot Research Barrier Goes Up in Smoke by Steven Nelson
June 22, 2015. U.S. News and World Report discusses the implications of the Obama administration’s decision to eliminate the obstructive Public Health Service review previously required for marijuana research. The article details the additional barriers still standing in the way of marijuana research, most importantly the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)’s monopoly on government-approved marijuana for research purposes.

Streamlined Regulations May Clear Path for More Marijuana Research by Julie Weed
June 28, 2015. Forbes reports on the Obama Administration and the Department of Health and Human Services’ decision to eliminate the Public Health Service (PHS) review for medical marijuana research proposals. Brad Burge of MAPS speaks about the variety of obstacles that have stood in the way of medical marijuana research, stating, “Medical marijuana drug development research, which aims to bring the whole plant through the FDA approval process so it can be prescribed, has been so tightly restricted that it has barely existed.”

WEED 3: The Marijuana Revolution by Dr. Sanjay Gupta
April 19, 2015
CNN’s WEED 3: The Marijuana Revolution, is a special report by CNN’s chief medical correspondent Dr. Sanjay Gupta about the politics of medical marijuana research, with a special focus on MAPS and Dr. Sue Sisley’s work to study medical marijuana for U.S. veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The documentary follows MAPS Founder and Executive Director Rick Doblin, Ph.D., and Dr. Sisley as they work to conduct the first clinical study of medical marijuana for PTSD, illustrating how the study has had to overcome numerous obstacles including the Public Health Service (PHS) review process and the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) monopoly on marijuana approved for clinical research.

For more psychedelic and medical marijuana research headlines, visit maps.org/media.
I Participated in the MAPS MDMA/PTSD Study and It Saved My Life.
by Study Participant
March 25, 2015

White House to Let Researchers Study Medical Marijuana for PTSD
by Bryant Jordan
June 23, 2015, 2014

Could Pot Help Veterans With PTSD?
by Johnna Rizzo
August 2, 2015

Psychedelics Changed the Way a Mother and Daughter Experienced Death
by Lara Salahi
July 30, 2015

I Did “Psychedelic First Aid” at a Festival in Costa Rica
by Eamon Armstrong
March 26, 2015

Harm Reduction Offers a Sane Way of Dealing with Drug Use at Festivals
by Yoonj Kim
July 21, 2015

Meet the Man Trying to Use Ayahuasca to Treat PTSD
by Thor Benson
July 11, 2015

We are the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS). Ask Us Anything!
by MAPS
February 11, 2015

White House Takes Huge Step Forward in Fight Over Marijuana Research
by Ryan Grim
June 22, 2015

That Loving Feeling
by Kasia Pawlowska
June 30, 2015

The Virtues of Psychedelic Harm Reduction at Festivals
by Staff
July 15, 2015

Drug Use at Festivals Doesn’t Have to End in Hospitalization or Arrest
by Chris Sosa
July 21, 2015

We are the Zendo Project, a non-profit harm reduction service. Ask Us Anything!
by Zendo Project
March 25, 2015
Thank you for your support!

Begin with the end in mind
then work backward to plan for reaching ambitious goals

—Ashawna Hailey, who left $5.5 million to MAPS in her will

Help create a world where psychedelics are integrated into society by including MAPS in your end of life plans.

Please contact MAPS at (831) 429–6362
jade@maps.org
MAPS was a proud member of Participation Row on the Grateful Dead Fare Thee Well Tour, June 27–28 in Santa Clara, CA, and July 3–5 in Chicago, IL.
Support leading research for adults on the autism spectrum.

MAPS is sponsoring a clinical study of MDMA-assisted therapy to treat social anxiety in 12 adults on the autism spectrum. MDMA-assisted therapy sessions take place at Los Angeles Biomedical Research Institute at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, and researchers at Stanford University are analyzing blood concentrations of several hormones to help understand the biological effects of MDMA when combined with therapy.

Learn more and donate today.

mdma-autism.org