

THE TWO FUNCTIONS OF MAPS

MAPS has two basic functions. The first is to support research and advance knowledge into the medical, scientific, religious, therapeutic, and recreational uses and abuses of psychedelic substances and techniques. The second is to serve as an educational organization to disseminate information from our research, facilitate discussion and promote the integration of psychedelic usage into our culture in whatever slow, gradual approaches suggest themselves.

Psychedelic, a word coined in the 1950's by Humphrey Osmond meaning "mind-manifesting", refers to more than just LSD. It includes a wide variety of substances and non-drug techniques that have in common the ability to facilitate the bringing forth, the manifesting, of portions of the contents of an individual's mind into more conscious awareness. Psychedelically-assisted experiences are only one small step in the long, slow process of discovery, integration, and growth.

Primarily, MAPS is involved with research into MDMA (Ecstasy) and has opened a Drug Master File for MDMA at the Food and Drug Administration. MAPS assists the efforts of researchers both in the US and abroad who seek to explore the risks and benefits of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy. MAPS attempts to act as a bridge between the psychedelic research community, who have been driven out of their research labs for a generation, and government regulators who must give their permission before legally approved research can begin.

MAPS also explores the consequences of the non-medical use of MDMA, supports the Native American Church in their struggle to continue the religious use of peyote, encourages efforts to renew LSD research, investigates the medical use of marijuana, and explores ways in which psychedelic psychotherapy may prove useful in the treatment of drug abuse.

THOUGHTS ABOUT THE ETHICS OF ANIMAL RESEARCH

After the MAPS benefit, several people wrote to express their disapproval of MAPS support for animal research investigating MDMA neurotoxicity, required by the FDA as a prerequisite for human studies. One writer suggested that computer technology or human research be substituted for animal research while another wrote that animal studies were inexcusably cruel, egocentric, and paternalistic. These are important issues, particularly in light of a request contained in this newsletter for the funding of several additional primate MDMA neurotoxicity studies at Johns Hopkins. The explanation of why I support animal research may not satisfy, but will hopefully be informative.

Certainly, taking of the lives of otherwise healthy animals to enlarge scientific knowledge is not above ethical criticism. If animal experiments can be justified at all, they must generate information which cannot be gotten any other way and for which there is a very important and specific need. The research must be conducted in a respectful and kind manner, with the animals well treated. Conducting animal studies places a heavy burden on the experimenter to use as few animals as possible, to gather as much data as possible, to use the data to its fullest, and to move into human studies at the earliest opportunity. *If any of these conditions are violated, the experiment cannot be justified. In my view, the proposed primate neurotoxicity experiments pass these first tests.*

Unfortunately, technology does not yet exist to gather sufficient information about MDMA neurotoxicity without direct physical dissection of brain tissue. The physical existence of a primate at Johns Hopkins is pitiful compared to life in the wild, but is healthy and clean. Being exposed to

Johns Hopkins is pitiful compared to life in the wild, but is healthy and clean. Being exposed to MDMA, even in large doses, seems not to be painful. There are no obvious functional consequences of the induced serotonin neurotoxicity. The carefully designed research is conducted with as few animals as statistics allow. The data contributes to a basic understanding of brain function and is used in negotiations with the FDA and in communications with MDMA users. Many of us involved with primate research volunteer for human studies when possible (See call for human subjects on page 6).

Though the primate research is not blatantly unjustified, more must be said. Essentially, I am willing to sacrifice the lives of tens of primates for the good of untold numbers of humans. I also believe the use of psychedelics to help people get in touch with a more healthy, holistic sense of themselves may in an indirect but plausible way help to build appreciation for the preservation and protection of our environment and the life it contains, including primates.

When the first MDMA toxicity studies were being conducted, I made a point of visiting the research laboratory in Little Rock, Arkansas. The day I visited twelve dogs were scheduled to be sacrificed and examined. That night, I dreamt of dogs as did one of the doctors. Watching the lethal injection, I was surprised at how fast life vanished. The awesome sacred fragile mystery transcended the powers of understanding of all the physicians in the hospital and all their sophisticated equipment. Within seconds, the lifeless dogs were placed on operating tables and highly refined scientific methods designed to help apprehend nature without bias were put into motion. To my surprise, the feeble efforts of science to plumb life's mysteries seemed sacred in its own small way. While the doctors carefully took apart, weighed and measured the many organs which had previously sustained the life of each dog, I told stories about various people's transformative MDMA experiences. All in the room were made aware of the reasons for our sacrifice of the dogs. That day, I learned I could shoulder the responsibility of animal research. I welcome further comments on this issue.

NEUROTOXICITY OVERVIEW

MAPS has assisted several research groups prepare applications for FDA approval of MDMA research in humans, all of which have been denied. FDA required MDMA's neurotoxic risk to be clarified in animals before human studies would be permitted. *The three critical questions about MDMA neurotoxicity are, 1) does it occur at human relevant doses, 2) If it occurs is it permanent or temporary, and 3) If it occurs, is it beneficial, harmful, or neutral?*

While the risk/benefit calculations of the FDA are politically skewed, they are constrained somewhat by data. Millions of dollars invested by the government in MDMA research are beginning to yield a clearer picture of the risks of MDMA. MAPS builds on government funded research by using our limited resources to support small pilot studies examining the effects of human relevant doses, overlooked in most studies which tend to explore the effects of higher doses.

The scientific data tends to support the conclusion that MDMA neurotoxicity, if it even occurs at average doses, extracts no measurable price when MDMA is used irregularly and in normal amounts. The scientific data, however, cannot yet precisely evaluate the risk to subjects in an MDMA research protocol. *What is required for FDA approval is continued support for small pilot studies defining the threshold dose at which MDMA no longer causes neurotoxicity, the rate and extent of regeneration, and functional consequences, if any, of neurotoxicity. Your contributions to MAPS, however small, make a critical difference in this research.*