

Unfortunately, the Swiss psychiatrists decided that MDMA neurotoxicity was not an important concern of theirs. They were also less than enthusiastic about conducting research into the therapeutic use of MDMA and LSD, despite the offer of psychiatrists at Harvard Medical School to collaborate on experimental design.

The Swiss psychiatrists are psychotherapists and not researchers, who realize that research protocols often inhibit the process of psychotherapy. Protocols preferred by the FDA are double-blind placebo studies. Because of the placebo, half of the therapeutic sessions, often conducted with patients who seriously need treatment, are seen by the psychiatrists as being less effective therapeutically than the patients deserve. In addition, the studies fail to remain double blind since experienced therapists and patients can determine the content of the pill by the presence or absence of the dramatic effects which psychedelics catalyze. Since the Swiss Health Authorities did not explicitly require formal research, scientific studies were never begun in Switzerland.

SWISS RESEARCH HALTED - RESUMPTION POSSIBLE BUT NOT CERTAIN

Early this summer, a very tragic, unfortunate, incident resulted in the temporary withdrawal of official permission for the medical use of LSD and MDMA.

At the present time, all use of LSD and MDMA in Switzerland has been stopped. There is currently nowhere in the world where LSD and MDMA are legally available to psychiatrists for the treatment of patients. Use will resume about November 1.

One of the Swiss psychiatrists led a psychotherapy group in France using psychedelics. Instead of LSD or MDMA, one patient received ibogaine, a drug derived from an African root which has been used to assist psychotherapy for many years and has recently been reported to be effective in the treatment of addictive disorders. Ibogaine produces vomiting in most people who take it and has not found a wide use. For reasons which are still uncertain, the person who tried the ibogaine experienced medical complications and died. An explanation for what occurred awaits autopsy results. In the psychedelic literature, deaths from ibogaine have not previously been reported.

As a precaution, the Swiss Health Authorities decided to halt all medical use of all psychedelics pending receipt of the autopsy report. The psychiatrist is facing legal complications and a patient is dead. Since the autopsy indicated that neither MDMA or LSD was involved, the Swiss authorities have decided to allow the Swiss psychiatrists permission to resume their work with MDMA and LSD, which have an excellent safety record and have demonstrated therapeutic efficacy. One new condition is being insisted upon by the Swiss authorities. Future use must be part of a research protocol, excellent news for those of us interested in psychedelic psychotherapy research.

NEW MAPS MDMA RESEARCH PROJECT - CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Another country may be about ready to open the door to psychedelic research. In July, I met with Czechoslovakian psychiatrist Dr. Zdenek Dytrych in Washington, D.C., during his visit to the US for a conference. Dr. Dytrych had been told about MDMA by Dr. Stan Grof, with whom he used to conduct LSD research in the 1950's and 1960's. Dr. Dytrych is the head of social psychiatry at a psychiatric research institute in Prague and has extensive experience with LSD research.

Dr. Dytrych feels that securing permission for MDMA research will be possible in the current political climate in Czechoslovakia, and is primarily interested in conducting research. To begin the process of MDMA research in Czechoslovakia, Dr. David Nichols and MAPS are seeking permission from the Drug Enforcement Administration to export for scientific purposes 100 grams of MDMA to Dr. Dytrych's research institute.

Dr. Nichols originally synthesized the MDMA several years ago for use in legal research. The MDMA which will hopefully be sent to Prague is from the same batch as that used in the *animal* toxicity studies which form the basis of the MAPS Drug Master File. Czech research using MDMA identical with that used in the previous US studies will simplify the process of securing FDA permission to enter data from Czech studies into the MAPS Drug Master File.

DEA approval for the export permit depends upon Dr. Dytrych obtaining an importation permit from the appropriate Czechoslovakian governmental authorities and Dr. Nichols obtaining DEA licensing as an exporter. The entire process is currently in motion, and just might happen. *Stranger things have happened.*

THE MAPS RESEARCH METHODOLOGY CONFERENCE

MAPS is organizing a working conference in Switzerland in early December to discuss the difficult methodological issues in psychedelic psychotherapy research. The meeting will be held in Bern, where the psychedelic psychotherapy in-patient treatment center was established by Swiss psychiatrist Dr. Jorg Roth. Invitations are being extended to the Swiss psychiatrists who worked with psychedelics, to Dr. Dytrych and associates from Czechoslovakia, to Dr. Lester Grinspoon from Harvard Medical School, to Dr. George and Una Ricaurte from Johns Hopkins, and Dr. Charlie Grob from U. of C. Irvine. Psychiatrists from the USSR and from Germany will also be invited.

The purpose of the conference is twofold. The Swiss will share the results of their therapeutic use of psychedelics over the last several years with psychiatrists from several countries. Building on the Swiss reports, the entire group will try to design one or several research protocols which would generate valuable scientific data about both risks and benefits, while interfering as little as possible with the therapeutic treatment of the subjects.

The opportunities for MDMA research in Czechoslovakia, the strong possibility that the Swiss research will eventually be resumed, and the continual clarification of the risk of neurotoxicity, all suggest that legal permission for MDMA research will eventually be granted in one or several countries. The lack of a satisfactory research protocol which adequately addresses and resolves the scientific challenges inherent in conducting research into the psychotherapeutic potential of psychedelically-assisted psychotherapy remains a major factor inhibiting research.

PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES STUDY THE MARKET FOR PSYCHEDELICS

A consortium of the largest European pharmaceutical companies has hired a consultant to prepare a research report on the potential medical market for consciousness-expanding drugs. The remarkable study, to conclude spring 1991, will focus on therapeutic applications and political considerations.