

The November
28 - December
1, 1990 MAPS
conference
in Bern,
Switzerland:
Research in
Pharmacologically-
Assisted
Psychotherapy

Purpose of the Conference

The conference was convened by MAPS with two purposes in mind. The first was to permit a small international group of psychiatrists, psychologists, neurologists, social scientists and drug policy practitioners to review and discuss the current state of knowledge concerning medical and non-medical risks and benefits of certain psychedelic drugs. Discussion focused primarily on MDMA and secondarily on LSD, psilocybin, and 2-CD. The second purpose of the conference was to review and discuss specific research proposals for the further investigation of these substances and to develop an integrated international research agenda and strategy.

Participants

P psychiatrists Aron Belkin, Lev Gertsik, Ivan Barkov and Nicholai Kharisov and psychologist/ translator Alla Malushina from Moscow, psychiatrists Zdenek Dytrych and Jan Prasko from Prague's Psychiatric Research Institute, psychiatrists Jorg Roth, Peter Bauman and Juri Styk of the Swiss Association for Psycholytic Therapy (SAPT) (five of whose members have been legally permitted for several years to use MDMA and LSD in psychotherapy), German psychiatrist Peter Hess, German psychologist and vice-president of the European Congress for the Study of Consciousness Michael Schlichting, German consultant to several Swiss pharmaceutical companies investigating the commercial potential of psychoactive drugs Andres Giger, US psychiatrists Charles Grob and Gary Bravo from the University of California at Irvine (who are preparing an application to the FDA to research the psychotherapeutic use of MDMA in terminal patients), US experts in MDMA neurotoxicity Lewis Seiden, Ph.D. and Dr. George Ricaurte,

US social scientists exploring MDMA's non-medical use, abuse potential, and medical use Deborah Harlow, M.A. and Jerome Beck, Ph.D., US LSD researchers psychologist Richard Yensen, Ph.D. and psychiatrist Donna Dryer, US drug policy expert Mark Kleiman, Ph.D., Swiss drug abuse physician Dr. Robert Hemmig, teacher of zen meditation Vanya Palmer, inventor of LSD Albert Hofmann, Ph.D., and representing MAPS, myself.

Major Outcomes

1. The participants recognized the worldwide absence of any systematized pharmacologically-assisted psychotherapy research program involving both pre-clinical and clinical investigations and supported increasing the research effort.
2. Psychiatrists from the US and the USSR agreed to begin designing a protocol for the investigation of the use of MDMA in the psychotherapeutic treatment of patients with terminal illness. Their intention is to conduct the identical experiment in both countries in order to increase statistical validity and generalizability of the results.
3. US neurotoxicity researchers tentatively agreed that the neurotoxic risk to patients with terminal illness is balanced by potential psychotherapeutic benefits. If the protocol is rigorously designed to provide additional data about both neurotoxic risk and therapeutic efficacy, they may support the protocol before the FDA.
4. MAPS agreed to help assemble a small group of distinguished U.S. scientists and researchers to review, critique and endorse protocols prior to FDA submission.