

Decisions by Psychiatrists

After two days of discussions, the US and the Soviet psychiatrists at the conference (Drs. Aron Belkin, Lev Gertsik, Ivan Barkov and Nicholai Kharisov from Moscow and Drs. Charles Grob and Gary Bravo from the US) decided to collaborate in the design of an experiment to scientifically explore MDMA as an adjunct in the psychotherapy of patients with terminal illness and to seek permission from their respective health authorities to conduct the experiment. Conducting the experiment in both countries will increase statistical validity and increase the generalizability of the study.

This study will permit data to be gathered about psychotherapeutic benefits in a population which often experiences high levels of fear and stress associated with impending mortality. In addition, long term adverse neurotoxic effects are of little significance with this population if such effects prove to be an empirical phenomenon. This experiment will also be specifically designed to test for neurotoxic risks. In addition to clinical evaluations, spinal taps can be performed before and after administration of MDMA and the brain can be examined post-mortem for signs of neurotoxicity.

The Czech psychiatrists (Drs. Zdenek Dytrych and Jan Prasko) also decided to seek permission from their health authorities to investigate the use of MDMA in psychotherapy but had not yet settled on whether to work with terminal patients or another patient group.

The German psychiatrist Dr. Peter Hess and psychologist Michael Schlichting indicated their primary interest was to research psychotherapeutic efficacy of altered states of consciousness, both with drugs and without. They are primarily interested in psilocybin and several newly discovered substances which are still legal in Germany. They have decided not to pursue MDMA due to political controversy and neurotoxic risk

The Swiss psychiatrists (Drs. Jorg Roth, Juri Stryk and Peter Bowman) indicated their intention to continue working with MDMA and LSD as soon as permission is renewed. They voiced a relative lack of interest in researching psychotherapeutic efficacy and a total lack of interest in exploring MDMA neurotoxicity, but await word from the Swiss health authorities about new requirements.

In addition to therapeutic research, most psychiatrists voiced a need for personal training sessions to develop their ability to work with pharmacologically-assisted psychotherapy. These training sessions should involve sanctioned, supervised self-experiences with various compounds, beginning with MDMA. The process of training may eventually be formalized and could result in some form of certification limiting the use of these compounds to those psychiatrists who had completed the certification process. Hope was expressed that the members of the Swiss Association for Psycholytic Therapy (SAPT) would offer training sessions to psychiatrists from around the world.

There was general agreement that continued international collaboration on research and training offers the best opportunity for systematic scientific progress and also facilitates the political process of securing permission for research within each specific country. MAPS was encouraged to serve as an on-going communication channel for the participants in the conference and was requested by the Soviets to develop the capability for computer to computer data transfer via the San Francisco-USSR satellite-computer link-up. MAPS will also facilitate the development of the protocol for the use of MDMA in the psychotherapeutic treatment of patients with terminal illness and, if permission is granted from the appropriate governmental agencies, will seek to provide funding for the experiments themselves.

Psychiatrists from the US and USSR decided to join together to research MDMA!