

# psychedelic afterglow: a project of study

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**T**HERE IS NO DOUBT that psychedelic therapy often produces powerful immediate effects on a patient's personality, spiritual development, psychosemantic description of states of consciousness, life values and even worldview. These effects have been demonstrated in numerous investigations (Grinspoon, Bakalar, 1979; Leuner, 1981), including our studies of ketamine psychedelic therapy of alcoholism and neuroses (Krupitsky et al, 1992; Krupitsky, 1992).

We have been carrying out ketamine psychedelic therapy since 1985. As a rule, we have noted dramatic psychological changes and dazzling clinical success after one psychedelic session. However, sometimes such improvements last only from several days to several weeks or months. That is, our data confirms the reality of the psychedelic afterglow (the psychological and clinical improvements produced by the psychedelic session). However, several important questions remain to be answered. What is the likely duration (length) of the psychedelic afterglow in each patient? What personality or clinical features of the patients determine the duration of such improvements? Do subsequent psychedelic sessions produce a set of effects more beneficial, comparable, or less beneficial than the effects from the first session? Are improvements produced by subsequent sessions more stable than the effects of the first session? Would treatment outcome be improved if the psychedelic session was repeated several weeks or months after the first session?

To answer all these questions, we hope to carry out a special study into the effects of repeated ketamine psychedelic therapy on alcohol dependence. The goal of this research into ketamine psychedelic therapy of alcoholism is to investigate the following aspects of the psychedelic afterglow phenomena:

## Hypotheses

1) Can the afterglow be changed (diminished or increased) after a few psychedelic sessions? The first hypothesis of this investigation is that repeated psychedelic sessions will change the afterglow by improving treatment outcome. We intend to compare the treatment outcome (i.e. clinical and psychological improvements) in two groups of alcoholic patients. The patients in the first group will receive just one ketamine session, whereas the patients in the second group will receive 5 ketamine sessions during one month (one session a week).

2) Can the afterglow be changed (diminished or increased) if the subsequent psychedelic sessions are administered over a longer period of time involving a year rather than a month? The second hypothesis of this investigation is that ketamine psychedelic sessions can be repeated periodically (within several months) with the useful effect of renewing the afterglow and improving the treatment outcome. This hypothesis can be evaluated through the use of a third group of alcoholics. These subjects would receive five ketamine psychedelic sessions during one year (one session each three months) in comparison with subjects of the second group, who would receive five sessions during one month (one session a week). If our hypothesis is correct, at the end of treatment and throughout the follow-up period of one year, these subjects will demonstrate, in comparison to →

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**at the level  
of our  
paradigm,  
we have  
already  
progressed  
from our  
previous  
approach of  
a "one  
session  
miracle cure"**

subjects in the first and second group, a significantly smaller amount of alcohol abuse, less psychopathology, a greater and/or more sustained period of sobriety, and a greater set of positive changes in personality characteristics, value orientations, spiritual growth and personality attitudes.

3) Does the afterglow depend on personality characteristics? The third hypothesis of this study is that alcoholic patients with different personality features will have different psychedelic experiences during the ketamine session and will demonstrate a differential duration of clinical and psychological improvements (psychedelic afterglow) after the psychedelic therapy. If our hypothesis is correct, at the end of the therapy and throughout the follow-up period of one year, patients with different psychological and clinical characteristics would demonstrate differential alcohol abuse, psychopathology, and changes in personality characteristics, value orientations, and attitudes towards themselves and the world around them. Data



*Dr. Krupitsky and Rick Doblin at a European College for the Study of Consciousness Conference in Germany*

from this experiment will hopefully allow researchers to specify the personal psychological and clinical indications for ketamine psychedelic therapy of alcoholics.

### **Project status**

These proposals are just in the planning stage. Unfortunately, due to the financial crises in Russia, we need additional financial support to carry out this research. But at least at the level of our paradigm, we have already progressed from our previous approach of a "one session miracle cure". We now believe that psychedelic therapy should be a prolonged process which should consist of at least several sessions, with special therapeutic goals and tasks for each session. We hope our new paradigm will open new opportunities in psychedelic therapy and allows us to better discern some underlying mechanisms of psychedelic therapy. •

### **References**

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## **MDMA Research in Russia: An Update**

BY DR. EVGENY KRUPITSKY

**For now,  
we can  
only wait.**

UNFORTUNATELY, against the background of the recent tumultuous events in Russia, I am afraid that our attempts to secure permission for our research project exploring the use of MDMA in the treatment of alcoholics and neurotics will be suspended for an indefinite time. The Supreme Soviet of Russia, which was going to adopt a new law on narcotics, is now "closed" by Yeltsin. Hence, the creation of the new Control Committee is also suspended for an indefinite time. Nobody can predict now what will be in Russia the next day. Until there is a new Control Committee to review our research application to conduct MDMA research, we will be unable to proceed. For now, we can only wait. •