

MDMA research: more than I bargained for...

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Dr. Charles Grob and Dr. Russell Poland are conducting several MDMA research projects at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center. (see pg 2) One of their projects compares a group of people who have used MDMA in the past with a control group of people who have not been exposed to MDMA. The study uses sophisticated scientific methodologies such as high-tech brain scans, computer-analyzed brain wave patterns during sleep, blood monitoring after subjects are exposed to a serotonin-stimulating drug or placebo, and neuropsychological tests.



Wired to the computer for Sleep EEG Monitoring

To help get this study off the ground, MAPS donated \$2,700. In addition, MAPS has helped the researchers find volunteers for their study. I decided to volunteer for this study myself because I feel it best to participate in a study before asking others to do so, and because I learn a great deal about research design (and my mind and body) by participating in research projects.

On the evening of January 16, I checked into the Clinical Studies Center at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center. The first study to be conducted was a sleep EEG experiment in which more than 20 electrodes are attached (some are glued!) to the body, face and scalp of the subject. At about 11:00 pm, the lights are turned out and the subject is expected to fall asleep with all the monitoring equipment attached.

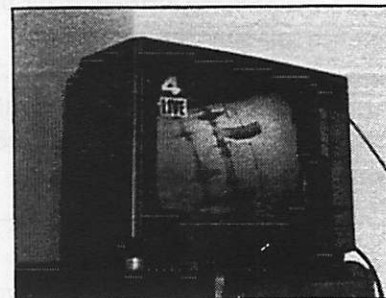
To my utter surprise, I was woken out of a deep sleep by an incredible rocking motion. Within seconds, I recognized that an earthquake was in process. Then I realized that all the electrodes connecting my body to the computer prevented me



Connected to IV blood draw, blood pressure machine, thermometer, and phone

from moving more than a few feet. The only thing to do was to ride out the earthquake, hoping the building could take the stress. Despite my predicament, I laughed when I thought that once again, MDMA research (with its spinal taps, radiation for brain scans, challenge drugs, and repeated blood tests) was more dangerous than MDMA itself.

Fortunately, the hospital is built on a bed of rollers in order to minimize earthquake damage. The rollers amplify the rocking motion but help prevent structural damage. As a result, there was virtually no damage to the hospital, and all the patients and staff escaped unscathed. Since the experiment had already begun, we decided to continue unless the bed was needed for emergencies.



TV News broadcasts real-time seismograph showing aftershocks

Hopefully, not all MDMA research experiments will contain such earthshattering surprises. For those of you still willing to offer your bodies to science, contact Carla Edwards at (310) 222-1663. Dr. Grob's story on page 2 describes the sort of volunteers he is looking for and what the studies will involve. •