

and several people have joined MAPS as a result. Only three days after Robert Jesse posted the Harbor-UCLA MDMA research update in March, another most welcome form of attention resulted. Dr. Grob received a call from a someone who had spotted the article, was changing planes at L.A. airport, and wished to drop by and discuss the MDMA research project with him before continuing on the last leg of his journey. After a short conversation, in which Dr. Grob convinced the visitor that he sincerely intended to conduct a fair and honest appraisal of MDMA's risks and benefits, the visitor decided on the spot to support Dr. Grob's research. He wrote a check for the full sum needed to begin the Phase I study: \$25,000!

In addition to the email and other services MAPS gets through America Online, we have

also established an account with an excellent local Internet service provider, Creative Cybernetics. The first Internet territory I explored was Usenet Netnews. In a single four hour session, I found 32 Newsgroups that yielded useful information and to which I'd like to post articles or messages about MAPS. If you would like to take on part of this task, please email me at st.maps@cybernetics.net. This is also the address to which you may direct your questions about ordering, renewing, or the status of MAPS online. I encourage members to point us to any interesting sites or situations that you come across on the Net.

With patience and your ongoing support, we'll continue to develop the exciting online options available to us. Thanks to all those who have provided and offered help with this project. ■

psychedelics and psychiatric drugs: national institute of mental health update

IN THE LAST MAPS NEWSLETTER we alerted readers to a study we are conducting at the National Institute of Mental Health on the interaction of hallucinogens and antidepressants. We asked to interview people who have taken both of these types of drugs at the same time. The response was tremendous and we'd like to thank everyone who took time to be interviewed about their experiences.

What we've been finding seems to break down into two types of responses, dependent on which class of antidepressant a person was taking. Those people who had been taking an antidepressant with selective effects on the serotonergic systems in the brain (drugs such as Prozac, Zoloft, Paxil) and then took LSD had a greatly diminished response to the hallucinogen. This decrease in response to LSD was also seen in those people who had been taking an MAO inhibitor.

In contrast, people who had been taking tricyclic antidepressants (such as Tofranil, Norpramine), which have primary effects on norepinephrine systems in the brain, and then took LSD had a potentiated response to the hallucinogen. This is similar to what happened to people who were taking lithium, either alone or in combination with a tricyclic antidepressant — there was also an increased response to LSD.

I have had only one report with MDMA thus far. A person took MDMA after taking an MAO inhibitor and had a hypertensive crisis (he collapsed for several hours). This is a very dangerous and potentially fatal combination which could have been anticipated based on the way both of these drugs work. Do not try this at home!

Please note that all the reports we received were from people who had been taking their antidepressants for at least 4-6 weeks. This is the timeframe when biochemical systems in the brain are significantly altered and therapeutic effects begin to occur. We do not know what the effects of short-term use of antidepressants might be on the hallucinogenic response.

This study is important because it helps scientists to better understand both how hallucinogens affect neurochemical systems as well as to understand how antidepressants act in the brain. The case reports that we have gathered (numbering over 40 now!) were presented at the Serotonin Club meeting in Chicago at the end of July and will be submitted for publication soon.

Anyone who has additional information can contribute to our study by contacting me at their earliest convenience. ■

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