

maps' organizational strategy

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MAPS IS A RESEARCH and educational organization focused on psychedelic studies. In combination with MAPS' annual financial statement (page 4), and the articles on most of the research projects that are being directly sponsored by MAPS (pages 11, 19, 26), this organizational strategy report should enable both new members and long-time supporters to obtain a more complete overview of MAPS' priorities, capabilities, and upcoming activities. Your comments, criticisms, and suggestions are especially welcomed so that MAPS may remain an effective agent on behalf of its members, staff and research teams.

MAPS' Research strategy

Psychedelic studies is a vast topic, especially considering that Dr. Humphrey Osmond, who coined the word "psychedelic" in 1956, intended it to mean "mind-manifesting".

MAPS is primarily focused on scientifically investigating and obtaining legal sanction for the medical uses of psychedelic drugs. While some religious and non-medical uses of psychedelics may be potentially beneficial and may eventually become socially sanctioned in some manner, the medical use of psychedelics is likely to be integrated into our culture before other uses. Furthermore, since the public has been exposed to so much misinformation and disinformation about psychedelic drugs, medical research is essential to begin the process of replacing fear with facts.

MAPS' core mission is to seek FDA permission for the prescription use of MDMA. Due to MDMA's uniquely gentle yet profound effects, the medical use of MDMA is more likely to be integrated into psychiatry before other more powerful, longer-lasting and more psychologically challenging psychedelics like LSD, psilocybin or mescaline. In addition to MDMA research, MAPS actively supports research with other psychedelics, each of

which has its own therapeutic potential and risk profile. However, MDMA is the "orphan drug" that MAPS has adopted. To further its core mission, MAPS has funded MDMA animal and human safety studies, opened an FDA Drug Master File for MDMA, assisted Dr. Charles Grob in obtaining permission for the first FDA-approved human study of MDMA ever conducted (p. 25), and is preparing to support efficacy studies into MDMA-assisted psychotherapy in the U.S. and abroad (p. 26).

Given that MAPS concentrates its efforts on the medical use of psychedelic drugs, it must be somewhat surprising to see that most of the articles in this issue of the newsletter focus on the work that MAPS is doing to develop the medical use of smoked marijuana. While marijuana can be considered a "mind-manifesting" drug, researching the "marijuana munchies" to promote weight gain in AIDS patients suffering from the HIV-related Wasting Syndrome certainly seems a long way from most people's picture of psychedelic research.

Marijuana research

The main reason that MAPS is involved in facilitating the first FDA-approved clinical trial with marijuana, as well as the first FDA-approved clinical trial with MDMA, is that there is a strong cultural bias against acknowledging that any drug that our government has made illegal has any beneficial uses at all, even under medical supervision. Since this cultural

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bias would inhibit the rescheduling of MDMA for prescription use even if the necessary scientific data were in hand, part of the work of obtaining social sanction for the medical use of MDMA must be to address this cultural bias. For both scientific and cultural reasons, at this time the medical use of marijuana is a more effective point of departure than the medical use of MDMA from which to address this bias. The scientific data that is necessary to submit to the FDA in support of an application to approve marijuana's prescription use would require about two years to gather, while the same quality of data regarding MDMA will take at least five years. Also, several polls suggest that a majority of the American public is ahead of the government and already approves of the medical use of marijuana (the most recent is a June, 1994 Parade magazine call-in poll that showed that 89% (!) of the callers favored the legal prescription use of marijuana). Strategically, obtaining legal approval for the medical use of marijuana will make it much more likely that legal approval for the medical use of MDMA can be obtained, as well for the other psychedelic drugs.

Once permission for Dr. Donald Abrams' study has been obtained and the pilot study begins, MAPS' work on the medical use of marijuana will have reached a major turning point. The door will have been opened to FDA-approved research, and a major step of the overall clinical plan for the development of the medical use of marijuana will be underway. After the conclusion of the pilot study, I hope that MAPS' efforts on behalf of the medical use of marijuana will be joined by other organizations whose mission focuses

more directly on marijuana and/or AIDS research. In particular, I hope that marijuana research will be supported by the Drug Policy Foundation (DPF), which has been given a 3 million dollar matching grant to distribute to various demonstration projects in drug policy reform, one of which may include medical research with marijuana.

MDMA research

MAPS' top priority for this next year is to help MDMA research advance from the Phase 1 stage of gathering basic safety data about its physiological and psychological effects, to the Phase 2 stage of investigating its therapeutic potential. If all goes well, the Nicaraguan study into the use of MDMA in the treatment of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder will become the first scientific controlled study of MDMA's therapeutic effects ever conducted, and Dr. Grob's proposed study into the use of MDMA in the treatment of pain and distress in end-stage cancer patients will follow. In order to support Dr. Grob's study, MAPS is committed to try to raise its entire budget of \$160,000. I hope to obtain a matching grant from a major foundation, and raise the rest from individual donors and

other foundations. MAPS is also working to initiate MDMA research in Israel (p. 41).

Conclusion

MAPS' organizational strategy is continually evolving. By making the strategy explicit, the members of MAPS are able to more fully assess where their organization is headed. Your comments and suggestions are encouraged, for this strategy is effective only to the extent that it is supported by the membership.

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