

university of new mexico dmt and psilocybin studies



RICK STRASSMAN, MD

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THE RESEARCH at the University of New Mexico has changed pace, with my move to Victoria, British Columbia. This move was, as many moves are, based on family needs.

After negotiations with the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), which funds our research, and Sam Keith, the Chairman of Psychiatry at UNM, I have been able to keep the NIDA funding, and will be in a quarter-time position at the University. This will translate into spending two weeks every two months in New Mexico to run sessions. The two remaining projects are the DMT-cyproheptadine study, and the psilocybin dose-response study.

We have described the DMT-cyproheptadine study in detail before. This is about 1/2 completed. Regarding our psilocybin study, we have decided to use 0.7 mg/kg oral psilocybin (free base) as our high dose for the psilocybin study, and 0.06 mg/kg as our low dose. There will be two intermediate doses, and a milk sugar (lactose) placebo involved in the full study. This study is just beginning. It should take somewhat over a year to complete, at this reduced pace.

Finally, we have received the final approval from FDA to begin an LSD dose-response study, comparable to that performed with DMT, and ongoing with psilocybin. We have permission to go as high as 500 mcg in a 70 kg person, but will most likely opt for lower doses because of the constraints of the hospital environment. Our low dose will be somewhere around 20 mcg. More on this later.

Two personnel changes have taken place. Laura Berg, RN, MSN, has decided to leave the program because of the difficulties involved in working such an erratic schedule with my 3/4 absence. Laura has been a valuable, trusted, and well-liked member of the research team. Her loss will be hard to make up. For the time being, Research Center nurses who are familiar with the studies and the volunteers, and are sympathetic to the work being done, will help us out.

The other change is an addition, in the person of Nancy Morrison, MD, who is joining the team. She is a solid clinician, teacher and administrator, and will be "standing in" for me while I am in Canada. She has a keen interest in the role of psychedelics as psychotherapeutic adjuncts, and has been primarily responsible for writing and pushing through the psilocybin project with the terminally ill we have been developing the last six months. Nancy has been sitting in on DMT and psilocybin sessions since late last year, and will be my co-sitter for as many of the upcoming DMT and psilocybin sessions as possible.

While in Canada, I will be focusing primarily on a re-write of the book (first drafted in 1992, during a sabbatical from the University) describing our research with DMT and psilocybin and using our volunteers' first-person accounts as the primary material. In addition, there will be a fair amount of personal reflection about my interest in this field, how this work was begun, the set and setting, chemistry and pharmacology, religious/spiritual questions raised by psychedelic experiences, pineal gland role in these states, government-academic interface, and other aspects tying our research into a cohesive whole. I also will work to obtain my license to practice psychiatry in British Columbia. •

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*Hallucinogenic Drugs in Psychiatric Research
and Treatment: Perspectives and Prospects, by Rick
Strassman, MD was recently published in the
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and Mental Disease, pages 127-138.*