



MAPS

Bulletin of the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies

Synchronicity, a concept originated by Dr. Carl Jung, refers to meaningful associations between a person's internal mental processes and the simultaneous occurrence of external events that seem directly related. Though these occurrences in the outside world are not caused by the person's consciousness in any understandable, linear manner, Jung postulated an "acausal connecting principle." Rationalists prefer to interpret these coincidences as the product of chance and dismiss theories that rely on forces that modern science has yet to define and measure.

Whatever the explanation, a remarkable coincidence played a crucial role in the January 1997 decision by the Joe Barnhart Foundation to pledge \$58,000 to support a MAPS-sponsored study into the use of MDMA in the treatment of pain and distress in cancer patients. The study is to be conducted by Dr. Charles Grob and Russell Poland, Ph.D., Harbor-UCLA Medical Center. We expect to begin the study sometime this summer, as a result of the efforts of Dr. Poland who received a \$12,500 grant from MAPS in late 1996 to supervise and complete the protocol design and approval process.

Letter from Rick Doblin, MAPS President

So, what happened? It occurred near the end of the Joe Barnhart Foundation's lengthy grant review process. On Monday morning, December 16th, I was notified by phone by a representative of the Foundation that the Board of Directors had voted 2-1 in favor of the proposal. Since unanimous agreement was required, the grant would not be awarded. However, I was also informed that the one director who had voted against the grant would be willing to reconsider if I could locate a respected medical/scientific authority in the Houston area, where the Foundation was located, who would support the project. This person would ideally be a faculty member in the medical school at either Baylor or University of Texas Houston. No such person came to mind or was in the MAPS database so I was left wondering if I would ever find a way to convince the Joe Barnhart Foundation that this controversial project was worth funding.

That afternoon, MAPS received a donation in the mail from a new member. Coincidentally (synchronistically?), she was from Houston and was on the faculty of the Graduate School of Social Work at the University of Houston. I immediately contacted her and explained my search. She suggested that I contact a professor emeritus of pharmacology at UT Houston. I did so and was awed to discover that this professor had known Joe Barnhart, was close friends with one of the two members of the Board of Directors who had voted in favor of the proposal, was already familiar with MAPS since he had heard me speak at a conference and, sadly, had lost his daughter to cancer and knew firsthand the need for novel treatments for pain and distress in cancer patients. Several weeks later, after evaluating the protocol and supporting documents, he gladly rendered a favorable opinion to the Foundation, which resulted in a vote of 3-0 for the grant.

The process by which the Joe Barnhart Foundation came to support MDMA research has deepened my belief that there is an enormous potential reservoir of support for medical research with marijuana and psychedelics. It is up to us to catalyze this potential into actual research. With the continued support of MAPS members, whose contributions permit MAPS to allocate 100% of large grants to specific research projects, much can be accomplished. Best wishes for a spring-time filled with productive synchronicity. – Rick Doblin, MAPS President, April 1997.