

UPDATE ON RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA USING PSILOCYBIN TO TREAT OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER (OCD)

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Approximately one year ago, we reported on the progress of our efforts to study psilocybin as a therapeutic agent in patients who suffer from obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and fail to respond to standard anti-obsessional treatment. (<http://maps.org/news-letters/v11n1/11115mor.html>) At that time we reviewed the rationale for this study as well as the series of steps undertaken in order to make this project a reality. We will take this opportunity to share with you our progress since that time.

After a number of challenges and delays, we have been able to obtain final Investigational New Drug (IND) approval for research with psilocybin from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), with MAPS paying for the synthesis of the psilocybin. We also obtained a certificate of confidentiality from the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), which is a legal tool that allows us to collect information from potential subjects without an obligation to report to any regulating bodies or criminal authorities, protecting in this manner the confidentiality of study participants. Since then we have been able to obtain additional research support from organizations such as MAPS, who facilitated the training of staff, and the Heffter Research Institute which provided support for the costly inpatient stays required as part of this protocol. We then obtained a

special license from the US DEA to prescribe and dispense psilocybin in the context of this research. Once all requirements were completed

we obtained the approval of the University of Arizona Human Subjects Committee, to begin recruitment.

Our team has entertained a large number of inquiries, and approximately fifteen interested subjects have engaged in several aspects of screening and consenting. Out of the subjects that engage in formal screening we are hoping that about 20 to 30% will be eligible to participate in

testing. Thus far we have completed testing of one subject and remain very optimistic about the study outcome. Testing takes place in a

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specialized procedure room at the Psychopharmacology Research Section of the University of Arizona Health Sciences Center. We have recently developed a contract with our hospital that will allow us to admit subjects overnight for observation in the psychiatric unit as mandated by the FDA.

Since testing is very time consuming and requires up to four day-long sessions each separated by about one week, we hope to continue testing subjects at a rate of one per month. In order to accomplish this we still need to work hard at recruiting patients who meet study entry criteria. The MAPS website (<http://www.maps.org>) has been a major source of referral for us, so we encourage the readership to consider promoting study participation for appropriate subjects.

Another challenge for our study has been the fact that a number of interested subjects live in distant parts of the country, making it difficult to travel and/or remain in Arizona for several weeks at a time. We hope that in the future we may be able to assist participants with some financial support to make their participation possible.

Our group remains very positive about this study, and we hope to be able to share with you exciting results when it is opportune. ■

THE RITES OF PASSAGE PROJECT: REQUEST FOR SUBMISSIONS

We are excited to announce that MAPS is launching the Rites of Passage project, aimed at sparking open and honest family dialogue on drugs, and helping families explore ways that psychedelics and marijuana can be better integrated into their lives. We hope to offer an alternative to abstinence-only drug education and raise the possibility that families may benefit from acknowledging the potential contributions of psychedelics in their lives.

To do this, MAPS is gathering written contributions, either signed or anonymous, from families who have tried to create a safe and supportive context for psychedelic experiences, primarily for the passage into adulthood, but also for the passage from life to death and other transformations and stages of growth in between. (To see several accounts that have already been posted, go to www.maps.org/ritesofpassage.html). We hope that the Rites of Passage project will allow people to share their experiences with others, discussing the risks, benefits, problems, and rewards of their choice.

If you have a story about using psychedelics or marijuana with a member of your family, please share it! Accounts should be between one and five pages long. We would especially like to have accounts written by each family member present. If you or your family member would prefer to record your story, you can send us the tape and we'll transcribe it.

You may wish to include details about the preparation and setting you chose, as well as your intentions for the experience. Please also discuss your reflections afterwards. How has this impacted your life? What would you have done differently? What would you tell other families considering the same choice?

Contact Brandy at brandy@maps.org or 941-924-6277 with questions or to submit your account. ■