Effects of Psilocybin in Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder: An Update

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At the University of Arizona, we are currently conducting a study that investigates the effects of psilocybin in obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). As this is an FDA Phase I study, our first and foremost goal is to demonstrate safety and tolerability of psilocybin in human subjects. At the same time, we are collecting pilot data regarding psilocybin's efficacy in treating OCD. The latter effort is based on anecdotal and theoretical evidence which suggests that psilocybin relieves the symptoms of OCD in some patients.

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Thus far, we have had 7 subjects and a total of 22 psilocybin dosing sessions. All sessions have been tolerated well with no significant adverse effects. All 7 subjects have said that they would, if given the chance, repeat their session experience again. We are still looking for volunteers to participate as subjects in the study, and hope to finish the study before July 2003. Preliminary findings will be made available in May at the American Psychiatric Association meeting in San Francisco.

Potential subjects must meet the following criteria: age 21-65 years old, must have previous experience with psychedelic drugs, and must have OCD which is treatment resistant (e.g. have tried one or more first-line medications at adequate dosage for a minimum of 4 weeks without significant improvement in OCD symptoms). Those interested in volunteering can contact Dr. Chris Wiegand at (520) 626-7708 or via e-mail: psilocybinaz@yahoo.com. If you are chosen to participate, travel and lodging expenses can be defrayed if you are in need of assistance. ■

I would like to thank MAPS for their support of my trip to Switzerland and Germany. I had the opportunity of visiting Dr. Franz Vollenweider and his team of researchers at the Heffter Research Center, Psychiatric University Hospital in Zürich. We discussed projects currently underway or planned at both Arizona and Zurich. We exchanged impressions and hypotheses about mechanisms of potential therapeutic applications, and shared experiences and strategies to overcome hurdles frequently encountered in the process of conducting psychedelic research. We also discussed the potential for collaborations in current efforts and future projects.

I also visited Dr. Torsten Passie, a very gifted and experienced psycholytic therapist and researcher in Hannover, Germany, who is currently conducting some interesting experimental studies in the effects of psilocybin on binocular depth inversion, binocular rivalry, neuropsychology and synaesthesias in healthy physician volunteers. This experience was also very enriching.

– Francisco Moreno, M.D., Co-Investigator