

MAPS Attends **American Psychological Association Conference**

By Valerie Mojeiko, MAPS Deputy Director

I DON'T WANT to have to get cancer to be able to receive psilocybin,” said Charles Schuster, M.D., former director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). Dr. Schuster was the discussant on a psychedelic research panel at the American Psychological Association annual conference in August 2010.



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MAPS-sponsored researcher Michael Mithoefer, M.D., was one of four presenters whose work Dr. Schuster discussed, along with Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine's Roland Griffiths, Ph.D., and Matthew Johnson, Ph.D., and Harbor-UCLA Medical Center's Charles Grob, M.D. Mithoefer presented results of MAPS' recently published study of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy in the treatment of posttraumatic stress disorder, while the others presented findings on the potential medical and therapeutic uses of psilocybin. While Dr. Schuster was happy to see psychedelic research being conducted for specific psychiatric disorders, he also actively advocated for exploration into the potential application of psychedelics for spiritual and personal growth and development—quite a refreshing perspective from a former NIDA Director!

The annual four-day conference presents the state-of-the-art of American psychology with research findings from scientists, practitioners, and academics across the nation. This year's conference was held at the San Diego Convention Center and surrounding hotels. Trauma and PTSD were heavily represented subjects at the event this year, as were other topics related to MAPS' work, such as military and veterans concerns, and issues related to international and cross-cultural research. Over 10,000 people were in attendance.

While we at MAPS are happy to have the enthusiastic support of Dr. Schuster, current NIDA Director Nora Volkow, M.D., showed a less progressive perspective in her plenary address, “Psychotherapeutic Drug Abuse: It's Not What the Doctor Ordered.” According to MAPS staff member Brian Wallace, Dr. Volkow “equilibrated non-prescription use with abuse

by freely exchanging these terms during certain points in her presentation. Since we know that all substances have a use and abuse profile, a clear differentiation between the two patterns is more appropriate than just lumping them together.” This presentation was made to a majority audience of therapists and care providers, who work with users and abusers of all types of drugs—from MDMA to crystal meth to modafinil.

At MAPS' exhibit booth, the majority of discussions with passersby ranged from extremely positive to neutral. According to MAPS staffer Berra Yazar-Klosinski, Ph.D., “...a [medical]



Berra Yazar-Klosinski, Ph.D., and Tom Kingsley Brown, Ph.D., at the MAPS booth at the APA conference.

doctor who walked by said the MAPS booth was, ‘a breath of fresh air.’”

“Many people I've spoken with at the booth are making statements like, ‘Well, it was made for therapy originally, right?’ or, ‘It used to be used for therapy at one point, didn't it?’”, said Wallace, who organized the exhibit. “There were, however, a small number of people who seemed to come by simply to argue. Hopefully, as they engaged the table staff, the controversy began to wash away as they learned a new perspective. The science and understanding of these medicines has far surpassed the fear-based political rhetoric at this point, and it is great that MAPS can be at events like this to educate the public to reflect this trend.”

We would like to thank our volunteers who worked the MAPS exhibit at this event: Lynn, Tom, Jenny, and Patricia.