MAPS
MULTIDISCIPLINARY ASSOCIATION FOR PSYCHEDELIC STUDIES

maps.org
mdmaptsd.org

Research Edition
BULLETIN

Volume XXV • Number 2 Summer 2015

From the Desk of Rick Doblin, Ph.D.

This Summer 2015 issue of the MAPS *Bulletin* primarily focuses on a series of updates about our research and educational projects. As we move steadily up the path toward U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)—which we currently project will take place in 2021—it's sobering to reflect that it was 30 years ago, on July 1, 1985, that the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) criminalized MDMA. After extensive legal hearings and testimony, the DEA administrator rejected the recommendation of DEA Administrative Law Judge Francis Young, who determined that it would be in the public interest for MDMA be placed in Schedule III rather than Schedule I in order to preserve its legal therapeutic use. As it turned out, this initial scheduling of MDMA was itself illegal and subsequently voided, since the Attorney General had failed to delegate the power to criminalize new drugs on an emergency basis to the DEA administrator.

It's now taken us 30 years since the summer of 1985, and about $5 million in donated funds, to get close to completing our international series of Phase 2 pilot studies of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for PTSD. We confidently project it will be another six years—until 2021—before MDMA-assisted psychotherapy is legally available as a prescription treatment.

I recently spoke with a new donor (an early employee of Facebook) and commented that business empires have risen in much less time than it has taken MAPS to gather just the preliminary data needed to design our pivotal Phase 3 multi-site studies of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for PTSD. It's tragic to think of the suffering that we could have successfully treated over that period of time if the DEA had not acted so harshly and out of fear to criminalize MDMA and its legitimate uses. I wonder how many people could have been helped if the DEA had listened to Judge Young's recommendation, whose decision (albeit ignored) made him an unsung hero of rationality and compassion at a time when drugs were being irrationally portrayed as America's #1 national security threat.

Thirty years later, we are finally seeing public perception shifting. In the 1980s, Nancy Reagan's "Just Say No" campaign and the Partnership for a Drug-Free America had the support of most women and mothers, who saw the criminalization of MDMA as protecting their children from its dangers. In contrast, just today (as I write this) the increasingly popular news

Connect with MAPS

maps.org/newsletter
maps.org/facebook
maps.org
maps.org/youtube
maps.org/twitter
maps.org/tumblr
maps.org/pinterest
maps.org/reddit
maps.org/googleplus
maps.org/linkedin