

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

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website VICE.com published an amusing and provocative article about “Moms Who Do Molly.” The article was about women from the rave scene who have grown up and become mothers, but who still make time for occasional MDMA experiences and consider those experiences as making them better parents.

We see more evidence for the shift in cultural attitudes towards MDMA in the September 2015 issue of the women’s magazine *Marie Claire*, which includes a remarkably positive and well-balanced feature article about MAPS’ MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for PTSD research with testimonials from three of the subjects from our Phase 2 pilot studies. Even the obligatory critical comments from drug abuse experts and defenders of Prohibition acknowledged the importance of research and the potential of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy.

Thirty years ago, it was law enforcement—police and the DEA—who led the charge to criminalize MDMA. Thirty years later, we have actually enrolled and treated a police officer with service-related PTSD in our South Carolina Phase 2 studies, as well as three firefighters (including one who was at the World Trade Center on 9/11) and 20 U.S. military veterans.

As justification for the criminalization of MDMA in 1985, DEA officials cited the claim that a single dose could cause brain

damage with lasting harmful consequences, if not immediately then over time as people aged. The science behind that claim was proven to be flawed, and, well, we’ve aged and neither the functional consequences nor the threatened holes in the brain have materialized.

Instead, as you will learn in this issue of the *MAPS Bulletin*, what has materialized is solid and rigorously conducted research into the real risks and benefits of a range of psychedelics and marijuana for multiple clinical conditions. With continued support from MAPS donors, our research will expand until we have brought the medical uses of psychedelic psychotherapy and marijuana back into the mainstream. Together, we can help heal people and create more compassionate policies.



With appreciation,

Rick Doblin

Rick Doblin, Ph.D.
**MAPS Founder and
 Executive Director**

MAPS: Who We Are

Founded in 1986, the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) is a **501(c)(3) non-profit** research and educational organization that develops medical, legal, and cultural contexts for people to benefit from the careful uses of psychedelics and marijuana.

MAPS furthers its mission by:

- Developing psychedelics and marijuana into prescription medicines.
- Training therapists and working to establish a network of treatment centers.
- Supporting scientific research into spirituality, creativity, and neuroscience.
- Educating the public honestly about the risks and benefits of psychedelics and marijuana.

MAPS envisions a world where psychedelics and marijuana are safely and legally available for beneficial uses, and where research is governed by rigorous scientific evaluation of their risks and benefits.

MAPS relies on the generosity of individual donors to achieve our mission. Now that research into the beneficial potential of psychedelics is again being conducted under federal guidelines, the challenge has become one of funding. No funding is currently available for this research from federal governments, pharmaceutical companies, or major foundations. That means that the future of psychedelic and marijuana research is in the hands of individual donors. Please consider making a donation today. maps.org/donate



MAPS
 MULTIDISCIPLINARY ASSOCIATION FOR PSYCHEDELIC STUDIES

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Editor: Brad Burge
 Design: Sarah Jordan
 ISSN 1080-8981

Visit maps.org/store for information about donations and purchases.
 The MAPS Bulletin is printed on 40% post-consumer recycled paper.



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