

Heffter Research Institute: Update April 2006



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GAINING APPROVAL FOR THE MEDICAL USE of psilocybin, or “medical psilocybin,” continues to be the current major aim of the Heffter Research Institute. Our research focus is two-fold. First, we are continuing our studies on how psilocybin affects various aspects of consciousness. This research involves numerous fundamental studies demonstrating that psilocybin can be safely used in medical applications, especially in persons who have never taken a psychedelic. The second prong of our research is the identification of a medical indication for the use of psilocybin. The research data we produce will be used to identify a medical indication for psilocybin and to show it is safe enough for humans, the two key requirements that must be met for psilocybin to be moved out of Schedule I and developed as an FDA-approved medical treatment.

The research data we produce will be used to identify a medical indication for psilocybin. We continue to support a mix of both clinical and basic science applications in order to promote interest in psychedelic research and medicine among both the public and the scientific/medical establishment.

Under the direction of Franz Vollenweider, M.D., the Heffter Research Center Zürich is conducting two studies at this time. A major Positron Emission Tomography (PET) study with psilocybin will be completed this year. By correlating the PET results with changes in body image and other variables, the study will provide a scientific basis for treating patients with eating and obsessive-compulsive disorders. This information will help us obtain the approval for treatment research with actual patients, which we plan to begin later this year. We believe the PET data may also help to attract funding from major foundations for the treatment studies. The three-dimensional EEG brain mapping study, which compares psilocybin with meditation on ego-functions, sense of self and perception, also will be completed this year.

Board member Charles Grob, M.D., has an ongoing program at the Harbor-UCLA Medical Center to study psilocybin in the treatment of anxiety in advanced-stage cancer patients. The five subjects treated so far have had very positive responses. Unfortunately, we are finding

that it takes a long time to recruit subjects with the courage to commit to this innovative treatment. MAPS members can participate by spreading the word: if you know of someone with a terminal diagnosis who might wish to be a subject, please direct them to www.canceranxietystudy.org, where they can obtain further information.

We continue to support a mix of both clinical and basic science applications in order to promote interest in psychedelic research and medicine among both the public and the scientific/medical establishment. Our mission is to demonstrate to the world the uniquely beneficial properties of psychedelics as tools to help alleviate human suffering. That goal involves not only the development of practical medical treatments, but also the understanding of human consciousness. Ideally, this research will enable humanity to appreciate better who we are and the relationship between our minds and bodies, knowledge that could provide numerous benefits to mental and physical health and improve our quality of life. •