

A letter from MAPS President Rick Doblin

For MAPS, the flow of time and work started accelerating into a higher gear on December 27, 2004, with long imagined possibilities and horizons seemingly within reach. In retrospect, the significance of what seemed to be yet another incremental step forward instead became a turning point. (One unfortunate consequence of our increased workload related to this turning point has been the delay in completing this MAPS Bulletin, for which we apologize. We've been relying on our free email updates to communicate on a more frequent basis, so please consider sending us your e-mail address if you haven't done so already.)


On December 27, *The Washington Post* published an exclusive article by reporter Rick Weiss, highlighted by a gorgeously colored portrait of Timothy Leary by light painter Dean Chamberlain. The article was about MAPS obtaining FDA and Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for a pilot study investigating the use of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy in subjects with anxiety associated with advanced-stage cancer (page 6). The study, to be conducted at McLean Hospital, Harvard Medical School, under the direction of Dr. John Halpern, represents the first psychedelic research project at Harvard in forty years. Also mentioned were MAPS' plans to conduct research into treating cluster headaches with psilocybin and with LSD, which hasn't been used in legal research in decades anywhere in the world (page 18).

Astonishingly, the *Post* article led to the largest flood of media coverage that MAPS has ever experienced, almost all remarkably positive. Adding to the media's interest, FDA and our IRB permitted MAPS to modify Dr. Michael Mithoefer's study of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy in subjects with treatment-resistant posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (page 3). At our request, the study can now include people with war-related PTSD of five years or less duration, such as Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. This change was misrepresented in some newspapers and Internet sites as having been instigated by the Pentagon, which was reported to be behind MDMA/PTSD research (a fantastic bit of mainstreaming that I'm reluctant to debunk). Most crucially for MAPS, the collective media toyed with but ultimately rejected connecting the revivers of psychedelic research with the feared legacy of Timothy Leary (equated with chaos and social disorder), enabling us to emphasize the lessons we've learned from the past and to move forward with substantial public support.

Seizing the moment, MAPS is going global. On March 24, 2005, MAPS convened a scientific conference in Israel, mostly about MDMA and ibogaine research; the conference will be covered further in the next issue of the Bulletin. MAPS is moving to catalyze three foreign MDMA/PTSD pilot studies, sponsoring studies in Israel and Spain and cosponsoring a Swiss study. MAPS is also developing a roving clinical monitoring team to ensure quality data collection and acceptance of our clinical data by regulatory officials worldwide.

Where blocked, we're better able than ever to articulate the need for change. On April 22, 2005, MAPS' pro-bono lawyers submitted a prehearing statement to the DEA Administrative Law Judge seeking to reverse DEA's refusal to grant Prof. Lyle Craker a license to produce marijuana under contract to MAPS, exclusively for use in federally-approved research. Our challenge is to bring the DEA obstruction of medical marijuana research to the attention of the public and the courts, forcing change by highlighting contradictions between ideals and actions. Toward this end, an ad about DEA's rejection of Prof. Craker's application was placed in a collection of political magazines by Common Sense for Drug Policy (page 5).

The balance between hope and fear has shifted, tipping toward hope and cautious excitement in the possibilities offered by psychedelic psychotherapy. Our castle in the air now has the makings of a solid foundation underneath. Your sustained support makes this all possible, is greatly appreciated, and essential.

 Rick Doblin, Ph.D. MAPS President