

Letter from Rick Doblin, MAPS President

This issue of the MAPS Bulletin, centering on our March 24, 2005, scientific conference in Israel, is our effort to share our experiences and our reflections with the people who've made this conference and project possible—MAPS' membership.

One of MAPS' most idealistic projects is our effort to sponsor MDMA-assisted psychotherapy research in Israel, in the midst of war, terrorism and the shadow of the Holocaust. Perhaps the fear surrounding illicit drugs there is lessened by the more profound forms of suffering already happening. In any case, Israelis welcomed MAPS with open arms, and we were heartened by the possibilities opening before us there.

Studies in Israel treating people with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are an integral part of our mission to develop MDMA into an FDA- and European Medicines Agency-approved prescription medicine, in that data from Israel can be submitted to both regulatory agencies.

MDMA is a popular drug among Israelis, especially youth, and we hope this research may also shed light on why there is so much MDMA consumed in Israel in non-medical settings. The article on page 15 suggests this goes beyond mere hedonism and can catalyze significant healing and stress reduction.

This study is also part of an effort, in some not-too-distant future, to sponsor research where Israeli and Palestinian therapists can work together to help people from all sides of the current conflict. We're trying to channel the healing potential of MDMA into studies that not only treat individuals suffering from the debilitating trauma of violent conflict but also, in a form of preventative medicine, address larger social patterns of fear, hatred, and division. Idealistic plans, certainly. Achievable, perhaps.

In our increasingly interconnected world, MAPS is going enthusiastically global. Building on last year's breakthrough of finally being able to start MDMA-assisted psychotherapy research in the US after twenty years of struggle, we're working now to start a series of pilot studies in Israel, Spain, Switzerland and Germany. These studies will lay the groundwork for obtaining approval for the prescription use of MDMA and other psychedelics in the US and Europe, and can also insulate our overall drug development program from the possibility of backlash in any one country.

The fragility of the renewal of psychedelic psychotherapy research was made clear to me in the course of responding to a request from Albert Hofmann, who asked MAPS to explore translating his book, *LSD: My Problem Child*, into both Russian and Chinese. (We will also be publishing a new English edition.) In the course of unexpectedly finding an existing Russian translation and initiating a Chinese one, I've learned that in both Russia and China, there are vague laws against the promotion of illegal drugs. MAPS couldn't exist in these countries and the laws are sufficiently intimidating that a Russian publisher told us that he's fearful of legal consequences were he to print a Russian edition of *LSD: My Problem Child*. Printing a Chinese edition is also problematic. As a result, we'll rely on posting the Russian and Chinese translations on the MAPS and Erowid websites, protected by the relative freedom of the Internet.

Here in America, there are no such laws. However, when MAPS tried to purchase a small ad on Google when people use the search terms "MDMA" or "Ecstasy," our ad was initially rejected. Turns out Google has a vague policy against accepting ads from sites promoting illegal drug use, similar to laws in Russia and China! Google, to its credit, eventually reversed its decision and let MAPS advertise.

Here in America, Prof. Lyle Craker, Director, Medicinal Plant Program, UMass Amherst, begins his MAPS-coordinated lawsuit against the DEA on August 22, 2005. His lawsuit challenges DEA's rejection of his license to grow marijuana, with a grant from MAPS, exclusively for federally-approved research. Meanwhile, Chemic Labs has now been waiting over two years for NIDA to respond to its application to purchase ten grams (!) of marijuana for MAPS and CaNORML-sponsored vaporizer research. The Drug Czar and the DEA try to justify suppressing science because of the fear that certain studies would "send the wrong message" to kids who apparently aren't deserving of a truthful message (an approach that lawmakers in Russia and China would support).

Enjoy this issue, about our hope and vision for an MDMA psychotherapy research program in Israel. With the ongoing support of its members, MAPS can cross many a threshold, both in the US and around the world.

Psychedelically yours,

—Rick Doblin, Ph.D., MAPS President