



Peter Gasser, MD

Update: LSD-Assisted Psychotherapy for Anxiety Associated with Advanced-Stage Life-Threatening Diseases: A Phase-II, Double-Blind, Placebo-Controlled Dose-Response Pilot Study

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THIS STUDY ON LSD-ASSISTED PSYCHOTHERAPY was designed after the 100th birthday symposium for Albert Hofmann in Basel, Switzerland in 2006, and was fully approved in November 2007. Since then, we have finished the treatment phase of 12 persons with life-threatening somatic diseases (e.g. cancer) with associated anxiety due to existential threat. Eight persons received two day-long experimental sessions with a full dose of 200 µg of LSD about 3 weeks apart, supplemented by weekly non-drug psychotherapy sessions for preparation and integration purposes. Four participants received an active placebo dose of 20 µg of LSD, supplemented by weekly non-drug psychotherapy sessions for preparation and integration purposes, with the possibility of crossing over to the full-dose treatment on an open-label basis after having had two low-dose/placebo experiences. Three of the four placebo participants crossed over to full-dose LSD experiences. We conducted 22 full dose LSD sessions in 11 participants.

Two and 12 months after the second LSD sessions, we conducted follow-up interviews and completed measures of anxiety. By July 2012, all of the 12-month follow-up interviews had been completed. We are presently preparing the final report to the Swiss drug control authority (Swissmedic) and a scientific paper is in progress, reporting the treatment safety and efficacy and the results of the 12-month follow-up.

The study was a success in the sense that we did not have any noteworthy adverse effects, all participants reported a personal benefit from the treatment, and the effects were stable over time. [Editor's note: The results were clinically significant, but not statistically significant due to the small sample size of 11 subjects.]

In their follow-up interview, participant #10 reported:

"The crucial thing with LSD is that you can explore these spaces of consciousness...You can be relaxed when

you queue up in the supermarket...I am sure that you can enter these spaces of consciousness without LSD. Meditation is the tool, but there is more power with LSD and in shorter time. You don't take LSD like daily meditation."

The therapeutic method we used involved exploring the spaces of consciousness in safety and gently guided by experienced therapists. Participant #10 says:

"I felt gratitude, that I was allowed to do that. That these people [the co-therapists] have made it possible. They supported me...I could cry or shout out loudly out of happiness. Such a happiness this was...I got a copy of the music that was played throughout the day and when I play it, [it] is like a gas station; I can fill myself with positive energy."

I am looking forward to continuing to investigate LSD as an adjunct to psychotherapy. We already have positive signs from the Swiss Ministry of Health that further investigations could be approved.

I am presenting the study and results at the Psychedelic Science 2013 conference in Oakland on April 19, 2013, the 70th anniversary day of the discovery of LSD by Albert Hofmann. 🌐



Setting for LSD-assisted psychotherapy.

Peter Gasser, MD is a physician of psychiatry and psychotherapy, working in private practice in Solothurn, Switzerland. He was trained in psychodynamic methods as well as in therapy with mind altering drugs, i.e. psycholytic (psychedelic) therapy. He has been a member of Swiss Medical Society for Psycholytic Therapy (SAePT) since 1992 and President since 1996. Dr. Gasser conducted the first study of the psychotherapeutic use of LSD in over 35 years. He can be reached at pgasser@gmx.net.