

PSYCHEDELICS

There has been a recent push to give psychedelic drugs to vulnerable individuals suffering from various mental disorders, including PTSD, depression, and anxiety. So far, the science and research do not support these claims. Any attempts to push unproven medical treatments on veterans or any other group are wrong. Americans deserve real treatments, not false promises.



ALASKA AIRLINES INCIDENT

In 2024, an Alaska Airlines pilot experienced a HPPD episode mid-flight.¹ He had taken psilocybin mushrooms just 48 hours prior. During his episode, he attempted to turn the engines of the plane off and was at one point handcuffed in hopes of restraining him.



A NEVER-ENDING TRIP

Hallucinogen Persisting Perception Disorder (HPPD) is a condition in which a sober individual reexperiences the effects of a hallucinogen they had previously taken. Re-intoxication can occur months or even years after the initial use. Symptoms include visual disturbances, disorganized thinking, paranoia, and mood changes. Individuals experiencing HPPD could be driving, taking a walk in the park, or even lying in bed when suddenly they begin to reexperience aspects of their previous drug use.⁴

AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION

“There is currently inadequate scientific evidence for endorsing the use of psychedelics to treat any psychiatric disorder.”⁵



Background

Psychedelics or hallucinogens are a category of mind-altering drugs found in plants and fungi or are synthetically produced



Risks

Side effects of psychedelic use include: drowsiness, tremors, increased heart rate, nausea, vomiting, seizures, coma, and suicidal thoughts^{2,3}

NATIONAL PSILOCYBIN-RELATED POISON CENTER CALLS ARE SKYROCKETING⁶

2019-2023

TEENS
317%

ADULTS
201%

CHILDREN
723%

39%
of psilocybin users

rated the experience as one of “the top five most challenging experiences” of their lives⁷

11%
of psilocybin users

reported that they put themselves “or others at risk of physical harm.”

FDA REJECTS MDMA

In 2024, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a formal rejection of MDMA-assisted PTSD therapy. Lykos Therapy, the group behind the trials, has faced increased scrutiny after the rejection was released, due to a plethora of ethical violations within the study.⁸

ETHICAL VIOLATIONS

Aside from the reasons discussed in the FDA's rejection letter, studies like this one have faced increased scrutiny due to incidents of sexual abuse. Therapies involving psychedelics can create opportunities for abuse, as patients are vulnerable during sessions.

This was evident in the allegations made by participants of the Lykos MDMA-assisted PTSD therapy trials.

Meaghan Buisson, a participant in the trials, came forward with accusations against her therapist and Lykos.⁹ She claims she was exploited during her sessions and states that Lykos has little to no oversight to prevent such incidents.

What is notable about cases like this is that they reveal hard truths about the future of psychedelic treatments. Even in the best circumstances, patients remain vulnerable, and the safety and ethical standards of therapists are a major concern.

Unlike other forms of therapy, psychedelic treatment is expensive, requires many therapists, and must be carried out in the best conditions. These aspects are not applicable to the majority of people in this country, making such treatments disqualifying.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Currently, Oregon and California have legalized psychedelics for medical use, with more states looking to follow in their footsteps. While states consider making changes to their drug laws, it's essential that politicians and lawmakers avoid the mistake of creating medicine policies through ballot measures or legislation alone. Medicine should be approved for use by scientists and experts, not those trying to score political points.

LYKOS THERAPY

Lykos Therapy is the pharmaceutical division of Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS). MAPS was established in 1986 by Rick Doblin and is financially supported by billionaire New York Mets owner Steve Cohen. Today, Lykos Therapy is behind several trials and studies that aim to get psychedelics approved for medical use.

WHY THE REJECTION

The FDA outlined several reasons in its response to Lykos explaining why it rejected the drug.¹⁰

1. Lykos failed to report adverse reactions from the drug, prompting the FDA to state, *“there are substantial concerns about the reliability of the safety data.”*
2. Lykos failed to prove to the FDA that MDMA was an effective treatment for PTSD.
3. Lastly, 40% of participants in the trials were recreational users of MDMA, which is absurd by itself, but it becomes even more concerning given the FDA's finding of a high rate of pre-screening failures in the trials which prompted the FDA to state, *“these two factors suggest the possibility of selection bias, with the enrolled population not being representative of the general PTSD population.”*

PSYCHEDELICS IN PERIL

Ultimately, this rejection letter should serve as a warning to those who continue to promote psychedelics to the American people. When required to follow the strict rules and regulations of the FDA, any psychedelic trial will likely fail. This is because research claiming benefits is mainly based on non-blind studies, meaning any positive results could be due to placebo effects. Many of these studies depend on patients who have already experimented with psychedelics, suggesting they had a positive experience and/or may have confirmation bias.

Endnotes:

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