

Position Statement on the Use of Psychedelics

Psychedelic drugs, also known as hallucinogens, including psilocybin, MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine), and DMT (N,N-Dimethyltryptamine), have the ability to produce changes in thought and perception. Although psychedelics have been used for centuries, their therapeutic mechanisms are not very well understood. Emerging evidence suggests that psychedelic therapies in conjunction with psychological support may have therapeutic benefit for treating several psychiatric conditions, including anxiety disorders, depression, substance use disorders, bipolar disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder. MDMA and psilocybin are the most researched psychedelics. They are not currently registered as a medicine for therapeutic use and being Schedule I drugs present a high risk for misuse and abuse. MDMA and psilocybin may show promise in a carefully selected individuals when administered in a controlled clinical setting with intensive support.

Factors to consider when using psychedelic therapy for the treatment of psychiatric disorder

The Food and Drug Administration has not yet fully evaluated the safety and effectiveness of psychedelic substances for medical purposes, and their use for clinical indications is currently investigational. Studies involving psychedelics should only be conducted in controlled clinical trials under the direction of researchers with appropriate qualifications, and overseen by an institutional research ethics committee to ensure careful monitoring and reporting of both safety and efficacy outcomes.

Psychological support is an essential component of psychedelic treatment approach. Clinical trials must be planned and managed by researchers with necessary psychiatric and psychotherapy training. It is important to carefully screen individuals and to conduct the studies in a closely monitored environment with intensive psychotherapy support.

The use of psychedelics can cause short- and long-term side effects, and there are inadequate data on their safety for individuals with a personal or family history of psychotic disorders. Clinical trials typically exclude people with a history of psychosis, mania, suicide attempts, or substance use disorders (unless these conditions are the focus of the study).

Different people may have different reactions to psychedelics due to variations in individual responses. It is important to approach the use of psychedelic therapies with caution and to prioritize the safety of patients, taking into account potential adverse reactions, interactions with other substances, and the possibility of psychological distress.

There is a concern that the use of psychedelics for clinical purposes may become widespread before sufficient evidence-based research and regulatory approval have been obtained, due to the increasing attention from the media, ballot initiatives, and commercial interests in the potential therapeutic benefits of psychedelics. Due to the deteriorating mental health statistics and the ongoing need for improved treatments for challenging psychiatric conditions, some advocacy groups have called for the rapid advancement and the implementation of psychedelic-assisted therapy in community settings. Clinical treatments should be based on scientific evidence in compliance with regulatory standards, rather than being influenced by popular opinion or ballot proposals.

Future research with longer follow-up, larger sample sizes, and more diverse populations are needed to better understand the therapeutic potential of psychedelics. This research should also include stronger control conditions to better assess the efficacy, safety, and predictors of response to treatment with psychedelics. Collecting longitudinal and systematic data on side effects in a way that enables aggregated analyses is also essential for understanding the potential risks and benefits of using psychedelics in a

therapeutic setting. Additional research is also needed to study the mechanisms of action, optimal dosing, and administration of psychedelic substances, as well as the most effective protocols for their use. It is also important to investigate how the specific type of psychotherapy administered may impact the therapeutic effects of psychedelics in order to fully understand the nature of the psychedelic-psychotherapy interaction.

Position statement

As an organization, we believe that psychedelic therapies may hold promise as a treatment option for individuals who have not responded to standard treatments for mental illness, but further research is necessary to determine their effectiveness and safety. It is important to note that these therapies are currently considered experimental and are not approved for mainstream medical practice. While there is some evidence to suggest that psychedelic therapies may have therapeutic benefits for certain psychiatric conditions, the evidence is not yet sufficient to recommend their use as a treatment option. The use of psychedelics can pose significant risks, particularly when taken in uncontrolled or unsupervised settings. These substances should only be used under the guidance of trained medical professionals in a controlled research setting, and not for self-medication or outside of a medical setting.

BHRS supports ongoing research on the use of psychedelics as a treatment for psychiatric disorders, and believes that limiting the use of psychedelics to clinical trials is the best way to ensure the safety of patients while this evidence is being developed. Further research should be conducted in a safe, ethical, and evidence-based manner, and clear guidelines and regulations should be developed to ensure responsible safe and effective use of these substances.

We recognize the potential value of psychedelic therapies for the treatment of mental illness, but emphasize the need for caution and further research to fully understand the risks and benefits of these treatments.

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