

Psychedelic Therapy Versus Antidepressants for Treating Chronic Depression

Group members: Louisy Silva, Lasse Struppe, and Jared Proulx

Abstract

More than 18 million people in the United States suffer from depression, making it the number one cause of disability. Depression is the primary reason why every 14 minutes someone dies from suicide, creating an epidemic. Since the introduction of selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRI) such as Prozac 30 years ago, only minor variations of selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRI) and serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRI) antidepressants have been developed. Unfortunately, over 50% of individuals do not respond to antidepressants. In order to fight back against the mental health epidemic, a need exists to innovate new ways to fight chronic depression. In addressing the potential benefit that psychedelic therapy has on patients suffering from depression the following evidence-based PICOT question was addressed: In patients with chronic depression, does the use of psychedelic therapy, compared to patients prescribed antidepressants, improve mood and signs of depression? The search strategy method examined research articles in CINAHL and PsycINFO, focusing on the keywords “psychedelic therapy”, “depression”, “hallucinogens”, “psilocybin”, and “LSD”. Initially the search produced 40 articles, and was then narrowed by concentrating on peer reviewed articles between 2017 and 2022. Articles omitting key words were excluded. The literature suggests that continued utilization of psychedelic therapies to treat depressive disorders can significantly decrease symptoms and feelings of depression for some patients.

Key words: Psychedelic Therapy, Depression, Psilocybin, Hallucinogens, LSD

References

- Carhart-Harris, R., Giribaldi, B., Watts, R., Baker-Jones, M., Murphy-Beiner, A., Murphy, R., Martell, J., Blemings, A., Erritzoe, D., & Nutt, D. J. (2021). Trial of psilocybin versus escitalopram for depression. *New England Journal of Medicine*, *384*(15), 1402–1411.
<https://doi-org.wv-o-ursus-proxy02.ursus.maine.edu/10.1056/NEJMoa2032994>
- Davis, A. K., Barrett, F. S., May, D. G., Cosimano, M. P., Sepeda, N. D., Johnson, M. W., Finan, P. H., & Griffiths, R. R. (2021). Effects of psilocybin-assisted therapy on major depressive disorder: A randomized clinical trial. *JAMA Psychiatry*, *78*(5), 481–489.
<https://doi-org.wv-o-ursus-proxy02.ursus.maine.edu/10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2020.3285>
- dos Santos, R. G., Hallak, J. E., Baker, G., & Dursun, S. (2021). Hallucinogenic/psychedelic 5HT2A receptor agonists as rapid antidepressant therapeutics: Evidence and mechanisms of action. *Journal of Psychopharmacology*, *35*(4), 453–458.
<https://doi-org.wv-o-ursus-proxy02.ursus.maine.edu/10.1177/0269881120986422>
- Galvão-Coelho, N. L., Marx, W., Gonzalez, M., Sinclair, J., de Manincor, M., Perkins, D., & Sarris, J. (2021). Classic serotonergic psychedelics for mood and depressive symptoms: A meta-analysis of mood disorder patients and healthy participants. *Psychopharmacology*, *238*(2), 341–354.
<https://doi-org.wv-o-ursus-proxy02.ursus.maine.edu/10.1007/s00213-020-05719-1>
- Jairaj, C., & Rucker, J. J. (2022). Postpartum depression: A role for psychedelics? *Journal of Psychopharmacology*, *36*(8), 920–931.
<https://doi-org.wv-o-ursus-proxy02.ursus.maine.edu/10.1177/02698811221093793>
- Kuburi, S., Di Passa, A.-M., Tassone, V.K., Mahmood, R., Lalovic, A., Ladha, K.s., Dunlop, K., Rizvi, S., Demchenko, I., & Bhat, V. (2022). Neuroimaging correlates of treatment

response with psychedelics in major depressive disorder: A systematic review. *Chronic Stress*, 1-22.

<https://doi-org.wv-o-ursus-proxy02.ursus.maine.edu/10.1177/24705470221115342>

Muttoni, S., Ardissino, M., & John, C. (2019). Classical psychedelics for the treatment of depression and anxiety: A systematic review. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 258, 11–24.

<https://doi-org.wv-o-ursus-proxy02.ursus.maine.edu/10.1016/j.jad.2019.07.076>

Nygart, V. A., Pommerencke, L. M., Haijen, E., Kettner, H., Kaelen, M., Mortensen, E. L., Nutt, D. J., Carhart-Harris, R. L., & Erritzoe, D. (2022). Antidepressant effects of a psychedelic experience in a large prospective naturalistic sample. *Journal of Psychopharmacology*, 36(8), 932–942.

<https://doi-org.wv-o-ursus-proxy02.ursus.maine.edu/10.1177/02698811221101061>

Sarris, J., Pinzon Rubiano, D., Day, K., Galvão-Coelho, N. L., & Perkins, D. (2022). Psychedelic medicines for mood disorders: Current evidence and clinical considerations. *Current Opinion in Psychiatry*, 35(1), 22–29.

<https://doi-org.wv-o-ursus-proxy02.ursus.maine.edu/10.1097/YCO.0000000000000759>

Watts, R., Day, C., Krzanowski, J., Nutt, D., & Carhart-Harris, R. (2017). Patients' accounts of increased “connectedness” and “acceptance” after psilocybin for treatment-resistant depression. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 57(5), 520–564.

<https://doi-org.wv-o-ursus-proxy02.ursus.maine.edu/10.1177/0022167817709585>