

Almost one in two Australians will be affected by mental illness in their lifetime

Psychedelic Medicines Could Provide an Effective and Ground-Breaking Treatment, says Mind Medicine Australia

Mind Medicine Australia (MMA) has been established as a new not-for-profit organisation to promote the development of research-backed and regulatory-approved psychedelic medicines in Australia. Psychedelic medicines, properly used, may be able to broaden the capacity of the medical sector to provide effective and long-lasting solutions for many people suffering from mental illnesses in this country.

An estimated 45% of Australians will experience a serious mental health illness in their lifetime. Psychedelic medicines such as MDMA, LSD and psilocybin (found in certain mushroom species) continue to demonstrate ground-breaking results in the treatment of mental illness in clinical trials conducted at major universities in North America and Europe. Despite these encouraging results, Australia has yet to commence its first clinical research trials in the field.

In a global psychedelic science renaissance, research has shown that psychedelic therapy can provide people with a road out of depression, can ease end of life anxiety for people with terminal illnesses and can bring addiction into remission, with just one or two doses. Psychedelic therapy trials have also shown a correlation with reduced suicidality and an increased openness to therapeutic solutions.

In the United States, trials of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy have been shown to relieve post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), with a 76% success rate. Pioneered by the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS), this research has been so successful that the American Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has granted MDMA breakthrough therapy status and MAPS is hopeful that MDMA will be approved as a prescription medicine in the US by 2022. In comparison, traditional antidepressants, such as Zoloft and Paxil, show a mere 20% success rate in treating patients with PTSD.

According to Peter Hunt AM, Chair of MMA: *“Mental illness is the global epidemic of our time. An estimated 200 Australians attempt to take their lives every day, with mood disorders including depression and anxiety being the leading causes of suicide. At any time it’s estimated that more than 1 in 5 Australians are suffering from mental illness - that means almost everyone in this country is affected by this epidemic, either directly or because of the suffering of loved ones.”*

Tania de Jong AM, a Director of MMA, explains: *“The rate of suicide has been steadily increasing in Australia over the past decade and these sobering statistics call for awareness, education and better therapeutic solutions to alleviate the suffering of individuals and the burden of mental health disease on society.”*

According to MMA’s Melissa Warner: *“By updating Australia’s perceptions of psychedelic medicine, we hope to provide the opportunity for conscious change and a fresh perspective for those who need it most. Mind Medicine Australia will seek to pioneer innovative treatment approaches for mental illness, by translating clinical research into therapeutic practice.”*

MMA’s focus on providing a strong ethical framework for the development of psychedelic therapies is emphasised by the presence on the Board of leading ethicist, Dr Simon Longstaff AO, who leads the Ethics Centre in Sydney.

MMA is already helping to fund the nation’s first ever psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy trial in Melbourne’s St Vincent’s Hospital through its association with research not-for-profit organisation, Psychedelic Research in

Science & Medicine (PRISM). This trial is due to begin in April this year once final regulatory approvals have been obtained. Terminally ill patients, who have not responded to traditional antidepressant or anti-anxiety therapies in the hospital's palliative care unit and who agree to be in the trials, will be treated using psilocybin in conjunction with psychotherapy sessions.

MMA is confronting the cultural misconceptions of psychedelic medicines in a highly-anticipated launch event on 13 February 2019 in Melbourne, with a keynote speech titled 'Psychedelic Therapy: A New Paradigm for Mental Health' by esteemed Professor David Nutt of Imperial College, London. Professor Nutt is one of the global leaders in the research and application of psychedelic therapies.

In various pilot studies, Professor Nutt's team gave patients with "treatment-resistant" depression a single dose of psilocybin. Half of them went into remission, "*which is not just getting better but being cured for a period of several months*", he says. Professor Nutt is excited: "*This is potentially a revolution in the treatment of depression and could arguably be the greatest contribution to health since the vaccine.*" Psilocybin has also been designated with breakthrough therapy status by the American FDA due to the potential revealed by clinical trial results.

Mind Medicine Australia Launch: A New Paradigm for Mental Health with renowned researcher, Professor David Nutt

Wednesday 13th February, 5:30 pm - 7:30 pm
The Carillo Gantner Theatre at the University of Melbourne, VIC

For tickets please visit: <https://events.humanitix.com.au/mindmedicinelaunch>

MMA was founded by award-winning social entrepreneurs Peter Hunt AM and Tania de Jong AM following their experience working with people suffering from mental illness. MMA works closely with PRISM and is backed by a team of experts in the fields of science, mental health, business, ethics and policy.

For further information, a full list of speakers, bios, interviews or event enquires please contact:

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About Mind Medicine Australia

Mind Medicine Australia (MMA) is working towards a world free of mental illness and addiction. MMA supports innovation in the treatment of mental health and wellbeing by acting as a central nexus between academia, government, technology, philanthropy and culture. With an active focus on the potential of psychedelic medicines and supporting technologies, MMA creates educational content, promotes policy development, cultivates professional partnerships and encourages and supports appropriate research into the science, benefits, and the risks of psychedelic medicines. MMA will also oversee the establishment of an accredited psychedelic-assisted therapy training programme for healthcare professionals, to the extent permitted by the regulatory environment.

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