

Today's care with illegal drugs

[Health & Medicine](#), [Addiction](#)



The war on drugs — according to Poltifacts, was a proud moment initiated by President Richard Nixon in the early 1970s inevitably this would become one of the biggest failures of United States history increasing incarcerations over six times the average; costing Americans millions in tax dollars and categorizing potential lifesaving cures as harmful drugs (Carroll).

Incarceration may have reached new levels during this time, however new testing for mental and physical abnormalities due to illegal drug use were also being used and developed. This was an embarrassing moment in a time filled with lies and propaganda that swept the nation for decades but with the benefits of medical marijuana and other drugs surfacing over this time from new and emerging pharmaceutical companies it started to shine a light on what we actually thought were harmful substances. For individuals with mental disorders, end life disorders and also, assisting further medical research; under a doctor's supervision it is important that the choice to legally dispense an illegal substance that could alter a person state of consciousness without any negative repercussions be allowed in society today.

With psychedelics being labeled as substances with no medical use and thought of as comparative to heroin by the DEA, research on it has been very limited, however, even with the few tests that have been run, many show significant and promising signs that they can be used to help treat mental disorders. According to a study done by John Hopkins University on the effects of psilocybin on patients with cancer related anxiety and depression, " About 80% of participants continued to show clinically significant decreases in a depressed mood and anxiety...83% reported

increases in well-being or life satisfaction... 67% of participants reported the experience as one of the top five meaningful experiences in their lives...

About 70% reported the experience as one of their top five spiritually significant lifetime events" (McMains). Along with the positive improvements on the psychological side of the patient there were also studies proving the improvement physically within the amygdala because psilocybin given in a 10mg and a 25 mg dose showed an increase in blood flow to this portion responsible for depressive thoughts. Thus, proven by MRI scans given by Dr. Robin Carhart-Harris, head of the psychedelic research at Imperial. What they also found is that they get similar results with psilocybin as they do with electroconvulsive therapy (ECT). With results like those from these experiments one can only imagine the significance it can have on the cancer community. Surveys released by Veteran Affairs show an increase in military suicides annually with no signs of reduction through current methods of treatment (" Suicide Among Veterans"). In a documentary by PBS News Hour, CJ Hardin, a veteran who like many others faced near-death experiences in combat, stressed his struggles with PTSD stating " the way that my emotions ran and how it felt uncontrollable, I didn't trust myself with a weapon with me because I was suicidal, very suicidal" (" Why Psychedelic Drugs"). This same veteran tried the normal therapy methods to try to find a reduction in his heightened anxiety with no such luck, he took a chance on MDMA administered by two psychologist and stated, " the effects after the first treatment were profound. I would say there was a 60% reduction in my symptoms" (" Why Psychedelic Drugs"). What this did to our veterans' brain is increase its blood flow and serotonin in the entire brain. The Washington

Post mentions MDMA helps compose the traumatized regions of the brain and restores rational thought (Shroder). However, when used long term MDMA can cause neurotoxicity of the brain. Even though this is not a long-term solution this could be used initially in patients to give them the boost and hope needed to elevate their depression. These psychoactive drugs are much more effective than standard forms of therapy available today proven by our testing discussed above. With improvements made by today's testing, it would be inhumane to keep these treatments away from the thousands of people suffering every day from mental illnesses when we have advances in a treatment.

There has not been enough evidence to rule any applications of these substances out and in somewhat of a paradox it has shown it can help reduce substance dependency with the increase in availability if they are obtained legally. According to Nature. com, there were 6 trials ran on more than 500 people with alcohol dependency and nearly 6 out of every 10 involved that were receiving LSD showed less alcohol misuse (Frood). With such a large group of people showing consistent results it is hard to deny that there is a very strong possibility and capability of a reduction in substance abuse across the board. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, " There were 139. 7 million past month alcohol drinkers aged 12 or older in 2014, including 60. 9 million who were binge alcohol users and 16. 3 million who were heavy alcohol users. In 2014, the percentage of people aged 12 or older who were past month alcohol users (52. 7 percent) was similar to the percentages in 2009 through 2011"(" Behavioral"). Imagine the real-life implications this could have on

not only the millions of US citizens affected by compulsive disorders but all over the world's population.

Even though there are undoubtedly many health implications and benefits to the use of drugs, many sternly believe that these substances are still very harmful and would lead to abuse if legalized. But with today advances in modern medicine and testing, we can prove with the increase of abuse of illegal drugs in today's society we have evolved to try and understand and possibly combat these old and new issues that are arising everyday like other similar substances, psychedelics among many other strands of drugs can cause not only negative physical and mental effects but also positive effects in people if properly used. It is when any substance is incorrectly used where the negative effects come into play and become harmful. In an article written by the National Institute on Drug Abuse it was documented that hallucinogens can cause serious health risks such as increased blood pressure and body temperature, which can lead to heart attacks and organ failure (" Hallucinogens"). Those already with health problems are most at risk as it has lead to seizures as well (" Hallucinogens"). In addition to the toll it can do physically to the body, most commonly feared is the physiological damage it can do. Psychedelics are very mysterious and are often used to alter one's state of mind. This poses a huge risk as the " trip" can and has in several cases taken a turn for the worst, but these users knowingly took this drug with health issues and used improper dosages which then led to neurotoxicity as demonstrated by persistent psychosis, paranoia, and suicidal thoughts. This can be verified by numerous studies completed all around the world, thus proving a decrease in blood flow to the brain because

of the surge of serotonin all at once (“ Hallucinogens”). With today's advancements in medications there are new ways to end a “ trip” if it turns bad for the user which causes living nightmares that last nearly 12 hours. In an article written by The Telegraph there were reports of a death linked to the use of a popular psychedelics; “ a 17-year-old French girl jumped to her death from one of Amsterdam's canal bridges in March after taking them” (Clements). This ultimately lead to the sale and use of such substance being banned and made illegal in one of the world's leading drug escapes, Amsterdam. Also, with new narcotics on the market from some of the top leading pharmaceuticals companies to initiate a new line of medications strictly to reverse these terrible side effects based strictly on testing done by research companies after years of extensive research on the medications causes and effects. Even though it has been proven for these medications to have negative effects, every medication at some point will have a negative effect on one person or another. This does not mean that we should be taking away something that might work for certain people that doesn't work for someone else, this is not how advancements in modern medicine are made.

Although these potential side effects are very serious and certainly possible, most of these effects are very rare and are mainly caused by consistent abuse. Even water which is essential to life can cause similar effects if abused. Traditional methods are notoriously ineffective and ironically enough, “ in the case of some drugs, such as benzodiazepines, may have addictive and other troubling side effects” (McMains). If these drugs are administered by professionals and heavily regulated by the government like

other currently legal medications the likelihood of these negative effects can be minimized. The possibility of it causing major negative psychological impacts to the users can also be reduced by a medical screening of the patient and administering it in controlled areas, as well as monitored with proper testing. With the substance becoming legal there will be more room for research on these substances which could lead to huge breakthroughs in our society and also lead to making the administration of the substances to become safer and more controlled. When compared to other substances and medications currently in use they are actually very safe. According to an investigation done by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention it was recorded that out of the 60, 000+ overdoses that occurred in 2016, nearly half of them were caused by drugs that can be legally prescribed today (“Cause”). To date, there has not been a single report of a drug overdose in connection to popular psychedelics like LSD or psilocybin also known as Magic Mushrooms.

Legalizing substances that are not considered legal but that have health benefits would open a whole new world of possibilities for human growth and development. It has been proven to help reduce the fear of death and anxiety in cancer patients, allows veterans suffering from PTSD and suicidal thoughts to return to a healthy life with their families, and gives struggling parents with alcohol and substance dependencies the ability to take control of their lives once again. “ Behavioral health disorders, which include substance use and mental health disorders, affect millions of adolescents and adults in the United States and contribute heavily to the burden of disease” (“ Behavioral”). Again, this is all proven with multiple years of

extensive research that is still going on till this day. Implications of these psychoactive substances may not be the cure for cancer or the key to worldwide peace, but for the millions suffering daily, this may be the answer to all of their prayers and could ultimately give them a reason to continue living.