

Fast-acting psychedelic associated with improvements in depression/anxiety

18 March 2019, by Emily Dressel

Johns Hopkins researchers have discovered that use of the synthetic psychedelic 5-methoxy-N,N-dimethyltryptamine (5-MeO-DMT) appears to be associated with unintended improvements in self-reported depression and anxiety when given in a ceremonial group setting. 5-MeO-DMT is a psychedelic that is found in the venom of Bufo Alvarius toads, in a variety of plants species, and can be produced synthetically.

In a survey of 362 adults, approximately 80 percent of respondents reported improvements in anxiety and depression after use. These improvements were related to more intense acute mystical effects during the 5-MeO-DMT experience, as well as increases in rating of the personal meaning and spiritual significance of the experience. Improvements were also related to stronger beliefs that the experience contributed to enduring well-being and life satisfaction. These results were published in The [American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse](#).

One of the unique properties of 5-MeO-DMT is the fast action and short duration of the [psychedelic](#) effects when compared to other psychedelics. "Research has shown that psychedelics given alongside psychotherapy help people with depression and anxiety. However, psychedelic sessions usually require 7—8 hours per session because psychedelics typically have a long duration of action," says [Alan K. Davis, Ph.D.](#), a postdoctoral research fellow in the Behavioral Research Unit, at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. "Because 5-MeO-DMT is short-acting and lasts approximately 30-90 minutes, it could be much easier to use as an adjunct to therapy because current therapies usually involve a 60—90 minute session."

Last year, Davis published a study in [Frontiers in Psychology](#) that found that 5-MeO-DMT administered in a psychospiritual retreat setting produced comparable ratings of mystical

experience as a high-dose psilocybin session in the laboratory setting. Another study by Davis that came out last year in The [Journal of Psychopharmacology](#) showed that 5-MeO-DMT had a safe profile of use and low risk for health and legal consequences.

"It is important to examine the short- and long-term effects of 5-MeO-DMT, which may enhance mood in general or may be particularly mood enhancing for those individuals experiencing clinically significant negative mood," says Davis. "Regardless, this research is in its infancy and further investigation is warranted in healthy volunteers."

More information: Alan K. Davis et al. 5-methoxy-N,N-dimethyltryptamine (5-MeO-DMT) used in a naturalistic group setting is associated with unintended improvements in depression and anxiety, *The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse* (2019). [DOI: 10.1080/00952990.2018.1545024](#)

Provided by Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

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