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WOAH DUDE- Psilocybin (‘Magic Mushrooms’): Not Just For Tripping

There has been a stigma against psilocybin and other psychedelic drugs for decades now, but there are many examples of these drugs helping people’s lives gravely. A specific case study from the New York Times tells the story of 55-year-old terminal cancer patient Pam Sakuda. Pam was part of a 2008 UCLA Medical Center study where psilocybin was prescribed to terminal patients to see if it would reduce their fear of one thing that awaits us all- death.

A very depressing subject to talk about, but it is during the toughest of times where the effects of psilocybin can be appreciated more genuinely. Pam was given 14 months to live but surpassed that mark by four years- yes, four whole years. After she had passed the 14-month mark she describes her life as an ongoing worry about when the time will finally come where she passes away. Her husband was quoted saying, “It got to the point where we couldn’t even make the most mundane plans because we didn’t know if Pam would still be alive at that time”.

Times were undoubtedly tough for Pam and her husband, but after the psilocybin treatments, Pam was given her life back. She was not cancer free, but her outlook on life changed drastically, and she lived the rest of her life enjoying it fully and appreciating every moment with her husband, instead of morbidly waiting to pass like she was doing so before.

Since the 1960s the government has done its hardest to control illegal psychedelic substances, like psilocybin (also known as magic mushrooms or shrooms) and keep them out of the streets. Although they may have been doing so in good faith, time has passed and new knowledge has shown that classifying psilocybin a schedule one drug was a big mistake.

Psilocybin was classified schedule 1 close to fifty years ago and has not been looked at since. This shows how misunderstood this substance is, psychedelics have been a major part of culture since the ‘hippy’ movements of the 60s, which may be a reason as to why psilocybin was regulated so tightly. Since it has been scheduled so tightly, there has been close to no research done on this substance, this is something that may slowly be changing.

John Hopkins University is known as the first research university in the United States, and even an institution of that prestige knows the potential benefits of psilocybin. A couple of months ago researchers from this university published a report in the scientific journal *Neuropharmacology* which analyzed psilocybin according to the standards the DEA uses to classify drugs.

In this report, the researchers concluded that psilocybin was not worthy of being classified as a schedule 1 drug, aka the drugs that the DEA believes are the most dangerous and the ones that have "no currently accepted medical use". For comparison, heroin is also a schedule 1 drug.

Besides this call for reclassification, there have been some scientific studies with psilocybin that have actually shown the positive effects of the ‘magic mushroom’. For example, a study done by the National Center for Biotechnology Information was published in PubMed Central, a scientific journal at the US National Institutes of Health’s National Library of Medicine depicts the effects of the substance on people with different psychological issues.

The researchers tested patients who suffered from suicidality and depression, anxiety disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder, alcohol dependence, and tobacco addiction. To summarize the lengthy studies, psilocybin was shown to significantly decrease suicidality and depression, anxiety disorder, OCD, alcohol dependence, and tobacco addiction.

These are not results that should be taken lightly, these are all serious issues that are very common in today’s day and age, so why would a substance that can help people suffering from these issues be a schedule 1 drug?

Psilocybin is undoubtedly a very mysterious fungus that does even more mysterious things to your brain when you are ‘tripping’. The reason why psilocybin is so misunderstood is that it has been classified as a schedule 1 drug, which means that the DEA believes there is no use of it at all in the medical arena, but that is simply not the case, as was shown in the aforementioned experiments and case study.

It is still a mystery as to why psilocybin does what it does to humans when ingested, but there is one thing that is not a mystery- psilocybin has a vast amount of health benefits that can improve the lives of a countless amount of people. The fact that it is still, in 2019, classified as a schedule 1 drug is a disservice not only to the medical community but to the community as a whole.

Maybe it is still schedule 1 because special interests in big pharma do not want psilocybin to cut into its pill profit, or maybe the government actually is worried about the effects on the human brain. Whether it be a conspiracy or not, psilocybin should not be a schedule 1 drug.

Oregon is the first state in the United States that has plans to make psilocybin legal; in 2020 it will be on their ballot. Other states should follow Oregon in making psilocybin legal because the fact that it is a felony to have possession of it is ridiculous, especially after the mental health benefits have been disclosed to the public.

Psilocybin has been taboo in the medical field for decades until a resurgence that has been happening recently. But recent medical studies have shown positive effects on people suffering some of the worst mental issues one can experience.

Whether psilocybin is a portal to an alternate dimension (like some users say) or not, there is one thing that is for sure: the positive effects on those suffering from mental health are there. Oregon is the first state to potentially legalize psilocybin, and other states should do the same.

Expand your mind. Advocate for the rescheduling and legalization of psilocybin.