

Press Release

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### **SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: The Science of Psychedelics to Treat Substance Use**

According to researchers at the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), the potential use of psychedelics in the treatment of various mental health conditions has made these drugs an area of scientific research, as well as growing public interest for their application to the treatment of Substance Use Disorders (SUD).

In the late 1950s Bill Wilson, the founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, participated in LSD experiments and encouraged further research on whether psychedelics could be useful in helping people recover from alcohol addiction. Since then, there have been many anecdotal reports of people overcoming substance use disorders using psychedelics, and experimental studies are lending some support to those claims, especially for alcohol use disorder.

Ketamine is a dissociative anesthetic that has emerged as a groundbreaking, rapid-acting treatment for treatment-resistant depression (TRD) and acute suicidal ideation. Unlike traditional antidepressants that can take weeks to work, ketamine often provides relief within hours. A variant of ketamine called esketamine is already approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and they have designated formulations of psilocybin (fungi) and MDMA (ecstasy) for the treatment of depression and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Psilocybin is a classic psychedelic that disrupts rigid, negative thought patterns. It is being investigated for alcohol use disorder, smoking cessation, and anxiety in patients with life-threatening illnesses. MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine) acts as an empathogen, releasing serotonin, norepinephrine, and dopamine, which increases empathy and reduces fear, enabling patients to process traumatic memories without becoming overwhelmed. Research is exploring its use in treating alcohol use disorder, social anxiety in autistic adults, and eating disorders.

Respectively, as “breakthrough therapies,” NIDA is actively funding research on these compounds because they represent a potential paradigm shift in the way substance use disorders (SUDs) are addressed.

According to Dr. Nora Volkow, NIDA Director, the promise of psychedelic compounds likely centers on their ability to promote rapid neural rewiring via serotonin receptors inside neurons, something that serotonin itself cannot do. That rewiring may explain these compounds’ relatively

long-lasting effects, even with just one or a few administrations. Some trials have found effects lasting weeks, but smaller studies suggest much longer durations.

Researchers at NIDA maintain sound scientific research is needed that includes clinical trials that can substantiate therapeutic efficacy, duration, and safety in large numbers of participants. The extent to which psychotherapy is necessary in conjunction with psychedelics and which methods work best remains an open question.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA): NIDA is a component of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIDA supports most of the world's research on the health aspects of drug use and addiction. The Institute carries out a large variety of programs to inform policy, improve practice, and advance addiction science. NIDA and the National Institute on Mental Health are the largest funders of psychedelic research at NIH. Currently NIDA is funding clinical trials on psilocybin for smoking cessation, ketamine for stimulant use disorder, and psilocybin and ketamine as adjuncts to medications for opioid use disorder (MOUDs). For more information about NIDA and its programs, visit [www.nida.nih.gov](http://www.nida.nih.gov).

SAFE, Inc. is the only alcohol and substance abuse prevention, intervention and education agency in the City of Glen Cove. Its Coalition is conducting alcohol, tobacco and other drug use prevention awareness campaigns entitled, "Keeping Glen Cove SAFE," to educate and update the community regarding alcohol, cannabis and other drug use and its consequences. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on [www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition](https://www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition) or visit SAFE's website to learn more at [www.safeglencove.org](http://www.safeglencove.org).