



**BECKLEY**  
FOUNDATION

PRESS RELEASE

MAGIC MUSHROOMS (PSILOCYBIN) –  
A BREAKTHROUGH TREATMENT FOR DEPRESSION

BECKLEY/IMPERIAL RESEARCH PROGRAMME

CO-DIRECTED BY DAVID NUTT AND AMANDA FEILDING

LEAD INVESTIGATOR ROBIN CARHART-HARRIS

[STRICT EMBARGO UNTIL 22:30 (GMT+1) 17.05.16]

The *Beckley/Imperial Research Programme's* latest study reveals remarkable results using psilocybin (the active component of magic mushrooms) to treat people with severe depression.

In a new study, led by Dr Robin Carhart-Harris, and funded by the Medical Research Council, patients received two separate doses of psilocybin 7 days apart, together with psychological support. The findings published in the *Lancet Psychiatry*, revealed that 67% of patients were depression free 1 week after treatment, and 42% still in remission 3 months later. These patients had suffered an average of over 18 years of depression and had found no respite in any other treatment.

Amanda Feilding, study author and co-director of the *Beckley/Imperial Research Programme* said, "It is very exciting that our latest psilocybin study paves the way for a new treatment for depression. For the first time in many years, people who were at the end of the road with currently available treatments, reported *decreased anxiety, increased optimism and an ability to enjoy things*. This is an unparalleled success and could revolutionize the treatment of depression."

Severe depression blights the lives of 1 in 15 people and many have little hope of improving or curing their condition. Doctors and scientists are still unclear about the exact brain mechanisms involved, but the extraordinary results from our latest study give vital clues that may dramatically alter the way we treat one of the world's most common and disruptive illnesses.

This study highlights the need for further research into this promising area of psychedelic- assisted therapy. Amanda Feilding explains, "The results from our research are helping us to understand how psychedelics change consciousness, and how this information can be used to find

breakthrough treatments for many of humanity's most intractable psychiatric disorders, such as depression, addiction and obsessive-compulsive disorder”.

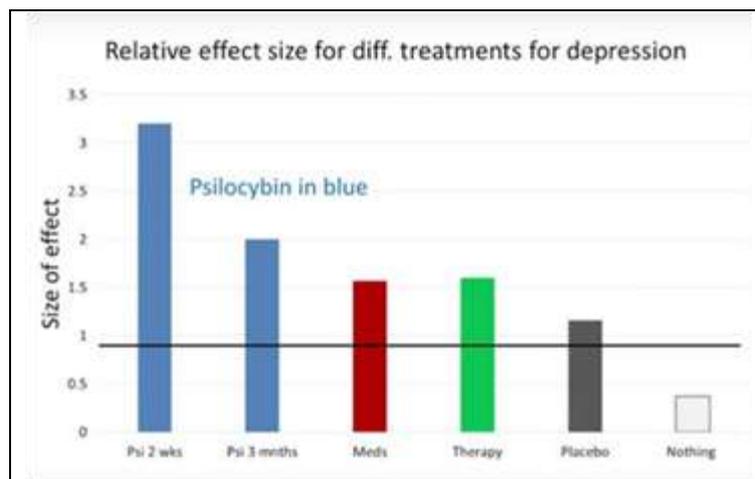


Figure 1. The effect sizes (a measure of how effective an intervention is) for different depression treatments in comparison to psilocybin.

The *Beckley/Imperial's* former studies with psilocybin showed that while under the effects, there is a disruption of connectivity in the default mode network, a network responsible for maintaining the sense of self, which has been shown to be hyperactive in major depressive disorders. The studies also revealed that psilocybin enhances autobiographical memory recollection, indicating its usefulness in psychotherapy, both as a tool for memory recall and to disrupt fixed negative patterns of thought.

An integral component of the psilocybin-assisted psychotherapy is music. Our previous studies with LSD have shown that music works in synergy with psychedelics, and intensifies and deepens emotional experience which can catalyse the healing process.

The psilocybin/depression study follows closely on the heels of the *Beckley/Imperial* LSD study, recently launched at the Royal Society. Results were published in numerous scientific journals including *PNAS*, and taken up by the media worldwide. The study revealed the brain on LSD for the first time, overturning a 50-year ban on the most significant drug acting on human consciousness ever discovered.

Amanda Feilding has been pivotal in this new wave of psychedelic research. Professor David Nutt, the senior researcher on the study, and eminent neuropsychopharmacologist at Imperial, credits Amanda with encouraging him to study psychedelics. Prof Nutt said, “Without Amanda we wouldn't be doing this, she inspired me into it. Together, via the *Beckley-Imperial* collaboration, we have overcome decades of censorship and produced many landmark studies of psychedelics and other psychoactive drugs.”

The Beckley Foundation, well-known as an organisation devoted to the reform of global drug policy, has in the last few years gained recognition for achieving major breakthroughs in scientific research.

“This latest study is another building block in the evidence that the changes in consciousness brought about by psychedelics can be an invaluable aid for psychiatry and psychotherapy”, comments Amanda Feilding.

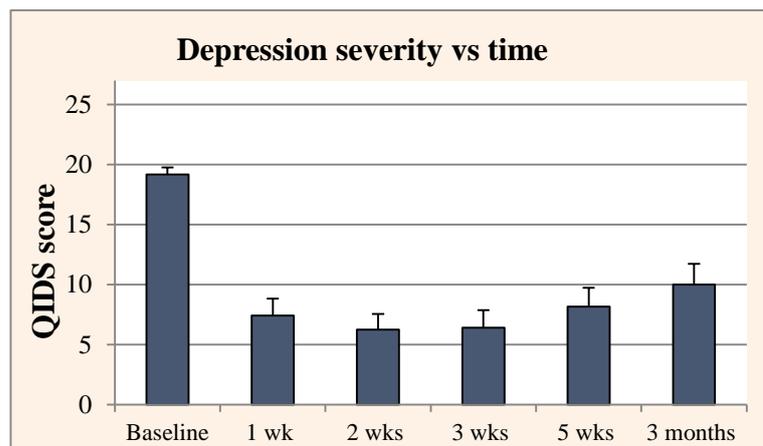


Figure 2. The change in the depression severity score (QIDS) over time.

Notes to editors:

About the Beckley Foundation:

The Beckley Foundation is a UK-based think-tank and research centre that, since its establishment by Amanda Feilding its Director in 1998, has been at the forefront of global drug policy reform and scientific research into the potential medical benefits of psychoactive substances. Its Scientific Programme uses the latest developments in neuroscience and neuroimaging technology to explore how psychoactive substances act upon the human brain, both to increase our scientific understanding of the mysteries underlying consciousness, and to explore new avenues of treatment for humankind’s many illnesses.

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