



PSILOCYBIN WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR TREATMENT-RESISTANT DEPRESSION: SIX-MONTH FOLLOW-UP

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BECKLEY / IMPERIAL RESEARCH PROGRAMME

Imperial College
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Medical
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Council

Evaluating the long-term effects of psilocybin

Previous results from the *Beckley/Imperial Research Programme* reported striking improvements in the depression scores of treatment-resistant depressed patients. Key findings were:

- All 12 participants improved after psilocybin
- 67% were in remission (depression-free) at 1 week post-treatment
- 42% were still in remission after 3 months

Here, we report results from an extension to our 2016 pilot study assessing psilocybin with psychological support for treatment-resistant depression. **The number of patients treated was increased from 12 to 20** and the **follow-up period extended from 3 to 6 months**.

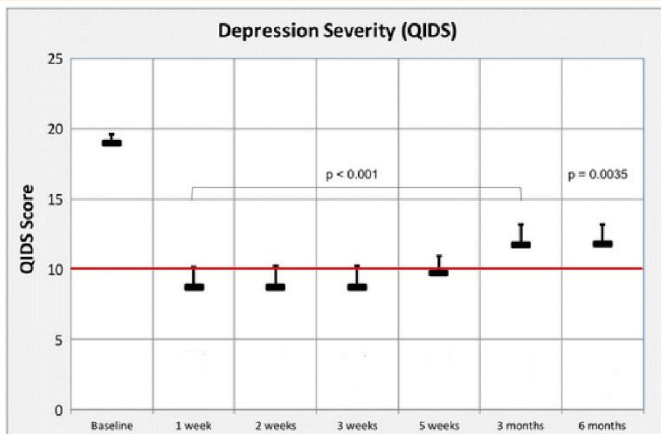
What did we do?

- 20 patients with moderate to severe treatment-resistant depression received two separate doses of psilocybin (10mg and 25mg, orally) 7 days apart.
- The primary measured outcome was the mean change in the severity of depressive symptoms, measured primarily using the QIDS-SR-16 questionnaire.
- QIDS-SR16 ratings were collected 1 week, 3 weeks, 5 weeks, 3 months and 6 months following the high-dose psilocybin session.
- Acute subjective effects such as insightfulness were also measured using the 11-Dimension Altered States of Consciousness questionnaire.

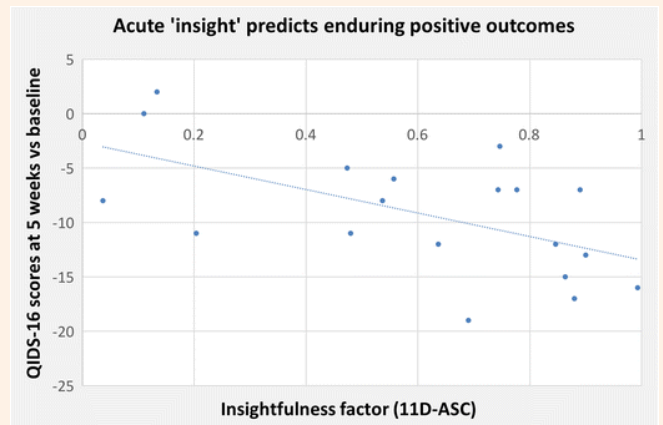
What did we find?

- Depression, anxiety and anhedonia scores were significantly reduced at 1 week, 3 months and 6 months post-treatment.
- All the patients having completed the study showed some reductions in their depression score at 1 week, with maximal effects seen at 5 weeks.
- Of the nine 'responders' (those who experienced a 50% reduction in symptom), only three patients had relapsed at the six month follow-up—with the remaining six maintaining clinical response.

- Acute 'insight', rated in the evening after the 25 mg psilocybin experience correlated significantly with reductions in depressive symptoms at 5 weeks.



Depression Severity vs time: depression severity determined by QIDS scores (high score = higher level of depression). Mean values are represented by the black horizontal bars with positive standard errors also included. The red line cut-off indicates that depression scores went from being severe (baseline) to mild (1-5 weeks). P values indicate significant decreases in depression scores compared to baseline.



Conclusion

Psilocybin's low toxicity, favourable side effect profile and putative rapid and enduring antidepressant action render it at least competitive with currently available treatments for major depression, the therapeutic actions of which may be either delayed, e.g. in the cases of SSRIs and psychotherapy, or short-lived, e.g. in the case of ketamine.

About the research team

Amanda Feilding is the founder and director of the Beckley Foundation. She and David Nutt are Co-Directors of the *Beckley/Imperial Research Programme*. Robin Carhart-Harris is the Programme's principal investigator.