

TV- Interview Tele Basel News Station, August 25, 2007

News Reader:

Peter Gasser, a medical doctor from Solothurn, wants to prescribe the drug LSD to patients that have received a medical death sentence. An LSD experience is supposed to release the fear from the people in the final stage of their lives. Already he has submitted a request in this regard. Albert Hofmann, the 101 year old discoverer of LSD is pleased – in his old age, people could yet benefit from his invention. Daniel Wahl reports:

Reporter:

As a member of the Swiss medical society for psycholytic therapy, Peter Gasser has already been interested in LSD, the wild and illegal drug of the sixties, 15 years ago. But only as recently as on the anniversary-symposium on the 100th birthday of the LSD inventor Albert Hoffmann, Peter Gasser has had the idea to treat patients with LSD.

Peter:

I believe, that patients who suffer from a severe state of anxiety, will experience a considerable reduction of these anxiety symptoms through two LSD experiences that they may undergo in a controlled setting, like the one we would offer in our practice.

Reporter:

Peter Gasser has already elaborated a study protocol on the subject. Twelve patients, with severe diseases e.g. cancer, will receive the controversial substance.

Reporter asks Peter:

Will you just be giving them a „trip“?

Peter:

(*laughs*). In a very plain way you could say: yes. But of course we pursue a goal. We want that this experience can be used in a beneficial way by these people so they can gain insights into their lives and their fears, what will be helping them in overcoming those.

Reporter:

In the Ethics Commission of the Canton Argovia (*the regional Institutional Revision Board which is responsible*) – where Peter Gassers request is being treated – the discussion was controversial.

Head of the Ethics Committee:

The main consideration was of course the protection of the patient, as it is with every other study, that means, it had to be well reflected: what is it all about, can this really bring a benefit to the patient with the use of this substance, or is it just one of a hundred clinical trials, that have already been done...

Reporter:

... or would it just be about a mere ungainly rehabilitation of LSD? But supposedly this is not the case here. In Burg, the 101 year old discoverer and inventor of LSD, Albert Hofmann looks over the Sundgau (*Region of western France*). His discovery has been banned for a good 40 years by governments and authorities. Now, in old age, the substance may yet still bring a benefit to humankind– Albert Hofmann is pleased.

Hofmann:

It may obtain an important significance for the support of dying people. And this is perhaps an important part of his fate for the human being: dying. And, ahm, the fact, that I mean LSD in a

certain sense releases or has released morphine in the dying person. I believe that this is of great significance.

Reporter:

He wasn't afraid of death, therefore he wouldn't need LSD when he will pass on, Albert Hofmann says.

Hofmann:

Many, many people could use it. A lot of people have a tense relationship or a fear of death.

Reporter:

In this case, according to him, LSD acts to unblock these fears.

The fear of abuse is great, three levels of approval Peter Gasser has to pass and if they give him the green light, the substance will be locked away in a safe in this cupboard.

Head of the Ethics Committee:

On the basis of the design of the study, the risk is acceptable and it is to be hoped, that this benefit, that is expected will actually occur. But you can only know with hindsight.

Reporter:

Can you imagine that LSD someday will again be socially acceptable in medical practice?

Peter:

I can imagine, yes. This is one of the visions, that our society (*Swiss medical society for psycholytic therapy*) has. However it should only be therapists, that are especially trained, who also know these substances and not that just any doctor can just prescribe this on prescription and give it to the people to take it home – this is certainly not a vision.

Reporter:

If in the end all the authorities give their OK, Peter Gasser will look for test persons and give LSD as soon as next year.