

Letter from Rick Doblin, MAPS President

THE VITAL IMPORTANCE of research into technologies of healing and peace is never more painfully apparent than in the midst of war. On August 3, 2006, on the same day that more than 230 rockets rained into northern Israel over the Lebanese border in one of the heaviest barrages of Hezbollah rocket fire in the recent war, a small package from Switzerland, ordered and paid for by MAPS, arrived safely and legally in Tel Aviv, Israel. Inside the package was close to five grams of pharmaceutical-grade MDMA. With the arrival of this MDMA, the final piece of the puzzle was put into place for our MAPS-sponsored Israeli pilot study investigating the safety and efficacy of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy in subjects with war- and terrorism-related posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This study is now set to begin, just as a tragically large number of Israelis and Lebanese have been freshly traumatized by yet another war. The technologies of war continue to advance, yet, more slowly and quietly, technologies of healing and peace are also progressing.

AT A RECENT CONFERENCE in Tel-Aviv, sponsored by the Israeli Anti-Drug Authority, one of the speakers noted that about 20 million doses of MDMA are smuggled into Israel each year, and “every one is a hand grenade.” The emotionally inflamed rhetoric of the War on Drugs, so often used to generate the fear required to justify the harshness of prohibition, is so clearly hollow when viewed through the lens of actual war.

THE POTENTIAL of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy to become an accepted and widely-used technology of healing is becoming more realistic, as evidenced by Dr. Michael Mithoefer’s latest update on his US MDMA/ PTSD study (page 6), Dr. Peter Oehen’s report on the imminent initiation of his Swiss MDMA/PTSD study (page 9), and MAPS Clinical Research Associate Valerie Mojeiko’s report on the Israeli MDMA/PTSD study (page 8). Furthermore, the recent donation to MAPS of \$250,000 by philanthropist Peter Lewis for these three pilot studies guarantees their implementation, which we expect will take the next two years. Then we will be in a position to review data and decide whether it makes scientific and financial sense to initiate the multi-site Phase 3 studies required to obtain permission from the FDA and the European Medicines Agency for the prescription use of MDMA.

MAPS’ OVERALL STRATEGY to develop psychedelics into prescription medicines also involves studies exploring the use of psychedelics in treating anxiety associated

with end-of-life issues. By demonstrating the value of psychedelics for a use that almost everyone is concerned about, to help ease the emotional and physical pain of dying, MAPS hopes to show that psychedelic psychotherapy offers potential benefits to people who would otherwise never consider taking such drugs.

MAPS IS WORKING with Swiss psychiatrist Peter Gasser, M.D., on the design and approval process for a MAPS-sponsored study exploring the use of LSD-assisted psychotherapy in people with anxiety dealing with end-of-life issues from cancer as well as other causes (page 10). Once approved, this study will become the first government-approved LSD psychotherapy research in over 35 years. This study will complement research by John Halpern, M.D., investigating MDMA-assisted psychotherapy in advanced-stage cancer patients (for which MAPS coordinated the design and approval process and which Peter Lewis is personally sponsoring) as well as Dr. Charles Grob’s ongoing Heffter Research Institute-sponsored study of psilocybin-assisted psychotherapy in advanced-stage cancer patients. Dr. Carl Hammerschlag’s case report describing the use of ketamine-assisted psychotherapy with a terminally ill patient (page 11) lends further support to the potential of psychedelics as tools to assist in the dying process, and suggests yet another promising area of research. As part of our educational mission, MAPS is proud to have just published Dr. Stanislav Grof’s new book, *The Ultimate Journey: Consciousness and the Mystery of Death*, based in part on his LSD research with cancer patients.

MAPS’ EFFORTS to develop marijuana into an FDA-approved prescription medicine are also moving forward. Our lawsuit against the DEA for refusing to issue a license for a MAPS-sponsored marijuana production facility is approaching its climactic moment: the recommendation of the Administrative Law Judge to the Administrator of the DEA (page 3). We’re re preparing for the possibility that the recommendation will be favorable.

AT TWENTY YEARS OLD, MAPS is going through an exciting yet challenging growth phase. At this time of celebration and reflection, culminating in our 20th anniversary gathering at Burning Man, I’m deeply grateful for the partnership of MAPS members and staff, which has made this all possible. Working together, we can accomplish even the seemingly impossible—the end of the Drug War and the legalization of psychedelic technologies of peace and healing.



Rick Doblin, Ph.D., MAPS President