Pschedelic Therapy Versus Antidepressants for Treating Chronic Depression

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Psychedelic Therapy Versus Antidepressants for Treating Chronic Depression
Louisy Silva, Lasse Struppe, and Jared Proulx
Faculty Mentor, Dr. Valerie Herbert
University of Maine School of Nursing

Considerations
There are many factors that impact the outcome of psychedelic therapy. For example, a study conducted in Maryland implemented music, sunglasses, and headphones during psilocybin dosing sessions (Davis et al., 2021). Unlike prescribed antidepressants such as SSRIs where the effect of the therapy is the pharmacological action of the drug, the therapeutic effect of psychedelic therapy is affected by:

- Mental state
- Subjective experience
- Quality of psychosocial support
- Context of consumption during dosing
- Integration post consumption
- Memories
- Perceptions
- Supportive environment

Table 1. Adverse Events Reported during the 6-Week Trial Period and on Dosing-Day 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>6-Week Trial Period</th>
<th>Escitalopram (N=29)</th>
<th>Psilocybin (N=30)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any adverse event</td>
<td>26 (87)</td>
<td>24 (83)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious adverse event</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related adverse event</td>
<td>22 (73)</td>
<td>23 (79)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverse event reported in ≥3 patients during the full trial period</td>
<td>20 (67)</td>
<td>15 (52)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nausea</td>
<td>8 (27)</td>
<td>9 (31)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatigue</td>
<td>2 (7)</td>
<td>7 (24)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4 (14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry mouth</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4 (14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migraine</td>
<td>3 (10)</td>
<td>1 (0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Carhart-Harris et al., 2021)

Conclusions
- The data showed an improvement in depressive symptoms in patients who participated in the clinical trials.
- The effects of psychedelic therapy compared to prescribed antidepressants showed similar or better improvement in feelings of depression.
- The Trial of Psilocybin versus Escitalopram for Depression displayed there was no significant difference between the two and resulted in no serious adverse effects.
- Some common adverse effects seen in patients using psilocybin therapy include headache, nausea, and fatigue.
- The article Effects of Psilocybin-Assisted Therapy on Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) discovered psilocybin was effective in managing MDD, alongside psychological support.
- LSD use revealed a reduce in anxiety, feelings of happiness and trust, and no serious adverse effects.

References


Jairaj, Rucker, et al. (2022)

Introduction
In the United States, more than 18 million people suffer from depression making it the number 1 cause of disability worldwide. Since Prozac was introduced 30 years ago there have only been new variations of existing selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRI) and serotonin norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRI). Although this is the case, over 50% of individuals do not respond to existing antidepressants. Researchers have been studying the use of psychedelic therapy (psilocybin, LSD, etc.) in the treatment of chronic depression.

PICO
In (P) patients with chronic depression, (I) does the use of psychedelic therapy, (C) compared to patients on antidepressant, (O) improve mood and signs of depression?

Methods
We examined research articles in CINAHL and PsycINFO, focusing on the keywords:

- “Psychedelic therapy”
- “Depression”
- “Hallucinogens”
- “Psilocybin”
- “LSD”

Results
- The data showed an improvement in depressive symptoms in patients who participated in the clinical trials.
- The effects of psychedelic therapy compared to prescribed antidepressants showed similar or better improvement in feelings of depression.
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