

Hallucinogen Gives Lasting Spiritual Boost

The scientists said their investigations may lead to new ways to help people with conditions such as *cancer*, *depression* and drug dependence.

In a previous study, the researchers gave psilocybin to 36 healthy, well-educated volunteers with active spiritual lives. After taking the substance under controlled conditions, 60 percent of the participants reported have a “full mystical experience.”

When the researchers checked with the volunteers 14 months later, the same percentage said taking psilocybin increased their sense of well-being or life satisfaction.

“Most of the volunteers looked back on their experience up to 14 months later and rated it as the most, or one of the five most, personally meaningful and spiritually significant of their lives,” lead investigator Roland Griffiths, a professor in the departments of psychiatry and behavioral sciences and neuroscience, said in a prepared statement.

The study was published in the current issue of the *Journal of Psychopharmacology*.

“This is truly remarkable finding,” Griffiths said “rarely in psychological research do we see such persistently positive reports from a single event in the laboratory. This gives credence to claims that the mystical-type experiences some people have during hallucinogen sessions may help patients suffering from cancer-related anxiety or depression, and may serve as a potential treatment for drug dependence. We are eager to move ahead with that research.”

He noted that while some of the volunteers “reported strong fear or anxiety for a portion of their day-long psilocybin sessions, none reported any lingering harmful effects, and we didn't observe any clinical evidence of harm.”

However, if hallucinogens are used in poorly supervised settings, the possible fear or anxiety responses could lead to harmful behaviors, Griffiths warned.