



Depression: leading cause of disability

- 350 million people suffer from depression worldwide.
- Depression accounts for up to 50% of chronic sick leaves.
- In Europe, 1 in 15 people (about 7%) suffers from major depression.
- **Only 50% of patients respond to antidepressants;** about 20% do not respond to any treatment.

Why did we do this study?

- **To conduct the first controlled investigation** of the safety and efficacy of psilocybin as a treatment for major depression.
- Informed by recent studies indicating the great therapeutic potential of psilocybin for conditions such as end of life anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and smoking and alcohol dependence.
- **We wanted to know: Is psilocybin effective and safe for patients with treatment-resistant depression?**

What did we do?

- Gave 12 patients with moderate to severe, treatment-resistant depression two separate doses of psilocybin (10mg and 25mg, orally) 7 days apart.
- Patients underwent **brain imaging, a clinical assessment,** and completed **self-report questionnaires.** Brain imaging data to be reported in a separate publication.
- Psychological support was provided before, during, and after each session.
- Symptoms were evaluated using standard outcome measures: Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) and Quick Inventory of Depressive Symptoms (QIDS) at 1 week and 3 months post-treatment.

About the research team

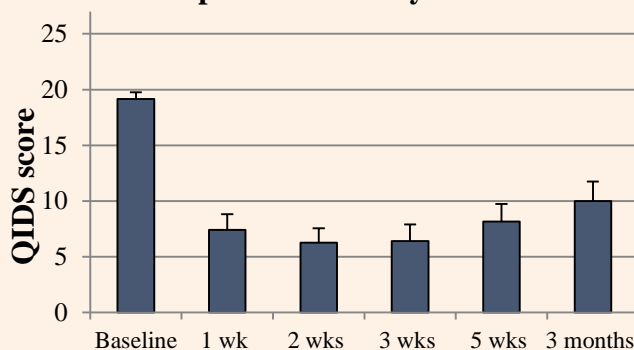
Amanda Feilding is the founder and director of the Beckley Foundation. She and David Nutt are Co-Directors of the *Beckley/Imperial Research Programme*. Robin Carhart-Harris is the Programme's lead investigator.

What did we find?

Psilocybin was well-tolerated and induced a rapid and lasting reduction in the severity of depressive symptoms

- Only a small number of minor adverse events (such as transient anxiety, confusion, nausea, headache) were observed.
- We saw marked and sustained improvements in anxiety and ability to experience pleasure.
- Relative to baseline, depressive symptoms were significantly reduced 1 week and 3 months post-treatment.

Depression severity vs time



Highlights of the Results

- All 12 participants (depressed for average of 18 years) improved after psilocybin
- 67% were in remission (depression-free) at 1 week post-treatment
- 42% were still in remission after 3 months

Funding

This study was funded by the Medical Research Council.

Why is it important?

- This small pilot study has paved the way for a larger-scale randomised controlled trial for psilocybin as a treatment for depression.
- More broadly, the present study should help to catalyse the re-emergence of a promising research area in psychiatry – psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy.