

Update: LSD Research at Orenda Institute

Written by Richard Yensen

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The dream behind forming the Orenda Institute was to continue psychotherapy studies with psychedelics that began at Spring Grove State Hospital (1960-1965) and were carried forward at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center (1965-76). I (Richard Yensen) joined the research psychotherapy team at MPRC in 1972. When the MPRC was closed to further psychedelic studies in 1976, a small group of researchers began meeting to find a way to continue the studies that were suddenly interrupted by controversy regarding the administration of the research center. During the mid 1980's there was a small program that involved LSD psychotherapy and cancer patients conducted under the auspices of the University of Maryland and North Charles General Hospital.

The dream that we might carry on this pioneering research occurred to us in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1985. Now we are about to begin with an initial study of LSD-assisted psychotherapy in the treatment of substance abusers.

On February 14th, 1997 the LSD was prepared in carefully labeled vials so that we will be blind as to the amount of LSD each of the subjects shall receive in their drug sessions (up to five per subject) until after our study is complete. Three hundred coded vials plus additional labeled vials are the result of careful dilution and bottling by Dr. David Nichols of Purdue University and the Heffter Research Institute. The starting point was 100 milligrams of pharmaceutical grade LSD Tartrate purchased from professor Rudolf Brenneisen at the University of Bern in Switzerland.

The LSD was transported to the Orenda Institute safe, a class V equivalent safe, where it has been stored as required by Drug Enforcement Administration regulations. A class V safe resists forced entry by all means for at least 20 hours (ours weighs close to a ton). With the supplies safely tucked away we shall begin the real work of compassionately treating sixty patients who have significant problems around substance abuse. This begins with a careful screening of candidates to confirm their substance abuse is of a quality and duration to merit psychiatric diagnosis and to establish that they meet other criteria for inclusion in the study. Our initial

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subjects must be local residents with solid support from a significant other who is willing to accompany them through the ups and downs of psychedelic treatment.

The MAPS Bulletin will report on subsequent developments of this study, including subject selection and when the first psychotherapy session will begin.