



# Psychedelic-Assisted Psychotherapy: An Overview of Empirical Utility, Rationale, and Future Clinical Considerations

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NEITHER SANDEEP NAYAK, PHD NOR MARY SALCEDO, MD HAVE ANY FINANCIAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMERCIAL INTERESTS TO DISCLOSE.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# OVERVIEW

- 1. Background / history/ models of use**
- 2. Empirical evidence**
  - a) depression
  - b) tobacco smoking
  - c) palliative
- 3. Psychedelic therapy delivery**
- 4. Psychedelic therapy as psychotherapy**
  - a) common factors
  - b) representative cases
- 5. Clinical issues and future studies**

# **I. Background / history/ models of use**

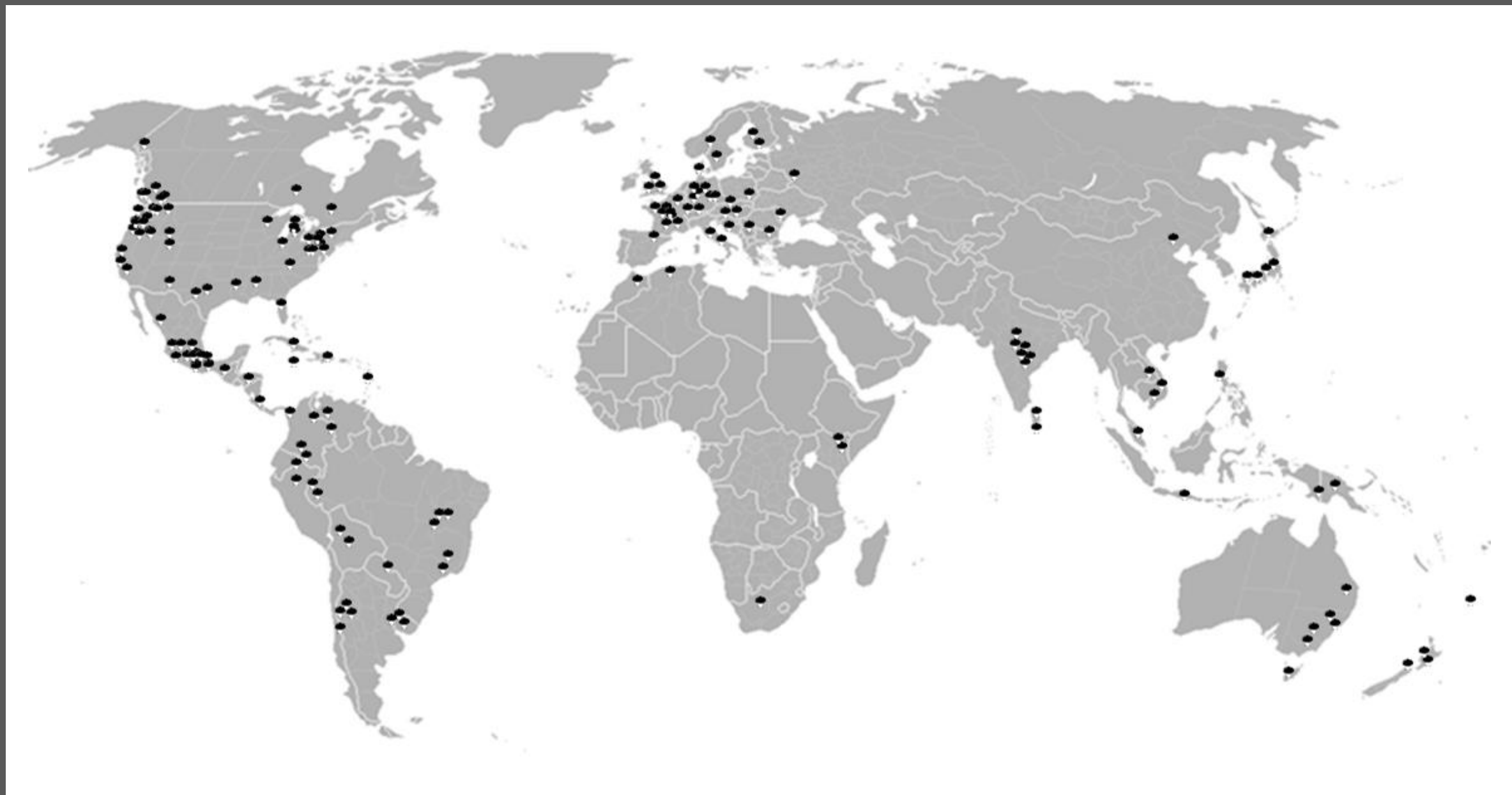
- a. What is a psychedelic?
- b. History
- c. Models of use

# “Classic Psychedelics”

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- “Classic psychedelic”
  - Psilocybin
  - LSD
  - Mescaline (peyote, san pedro)
  - Bufotenine
  - DMT
  - 5-MeO-DMT
- Psilocybin in >200 mushroom species





# “Classic Psychedelics”

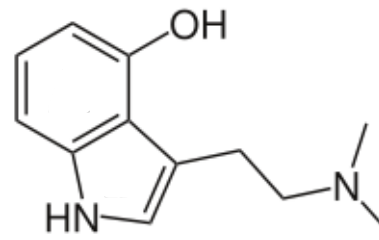
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  - 5-MeO-DMT
  
- Psilocybin in >200 mushroom species

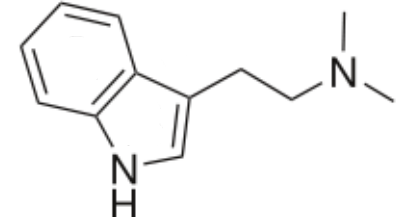




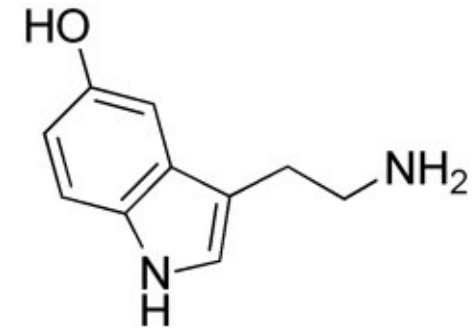
All psychedelics mimic serotonin



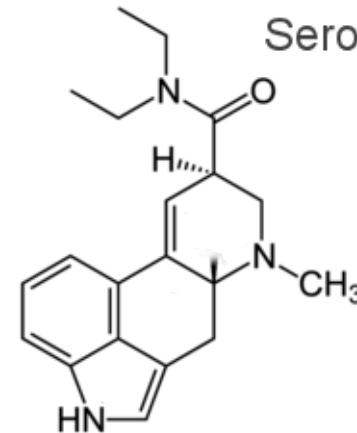
Psilocin



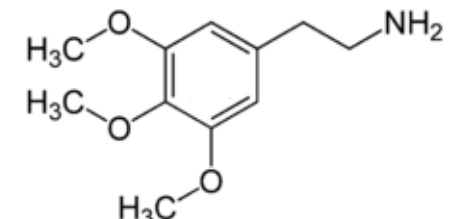
DMT



Serotonin (5-HT)

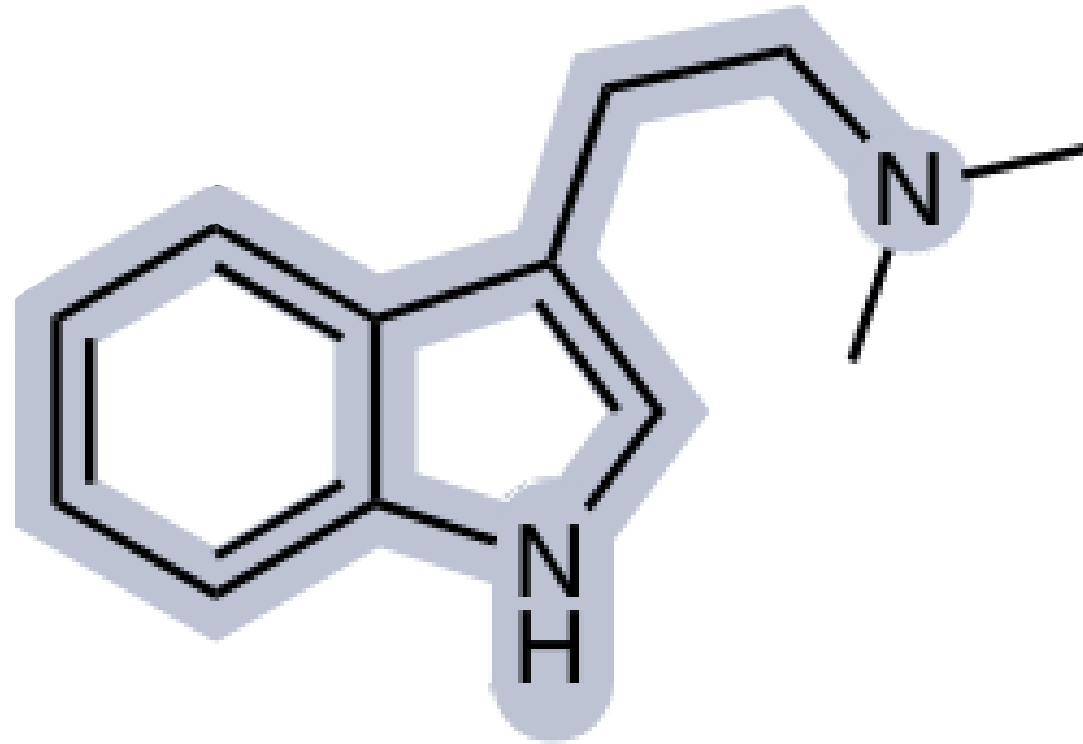


LSD



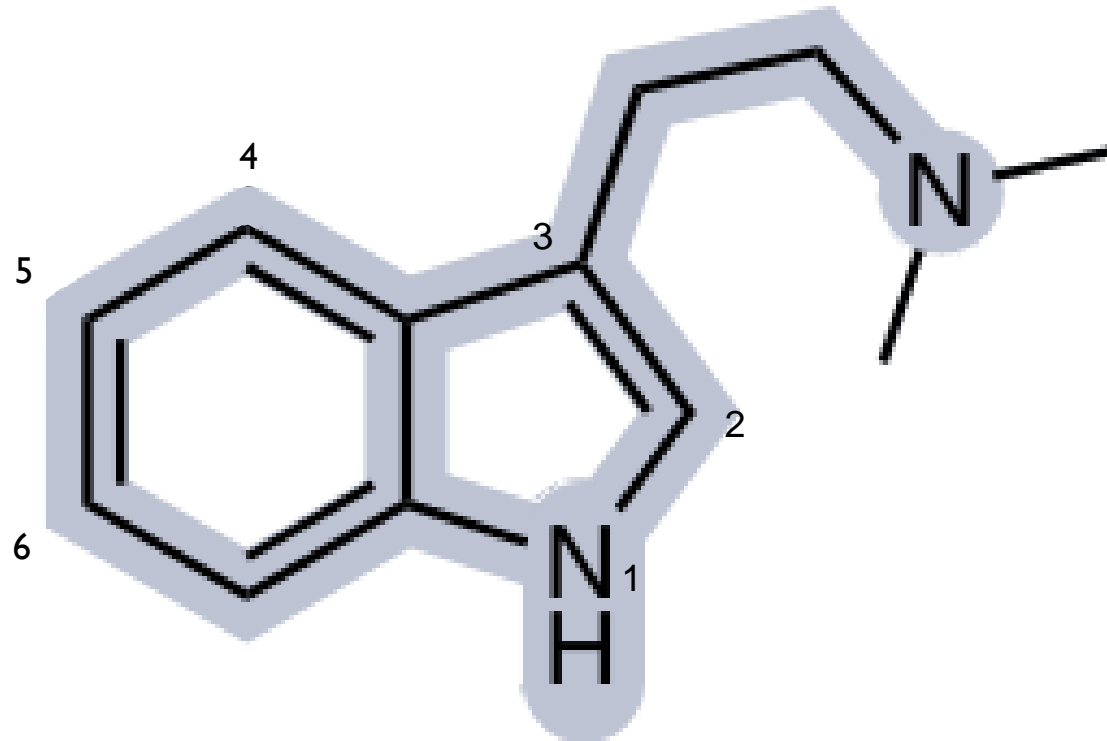
Mescaline

DMT



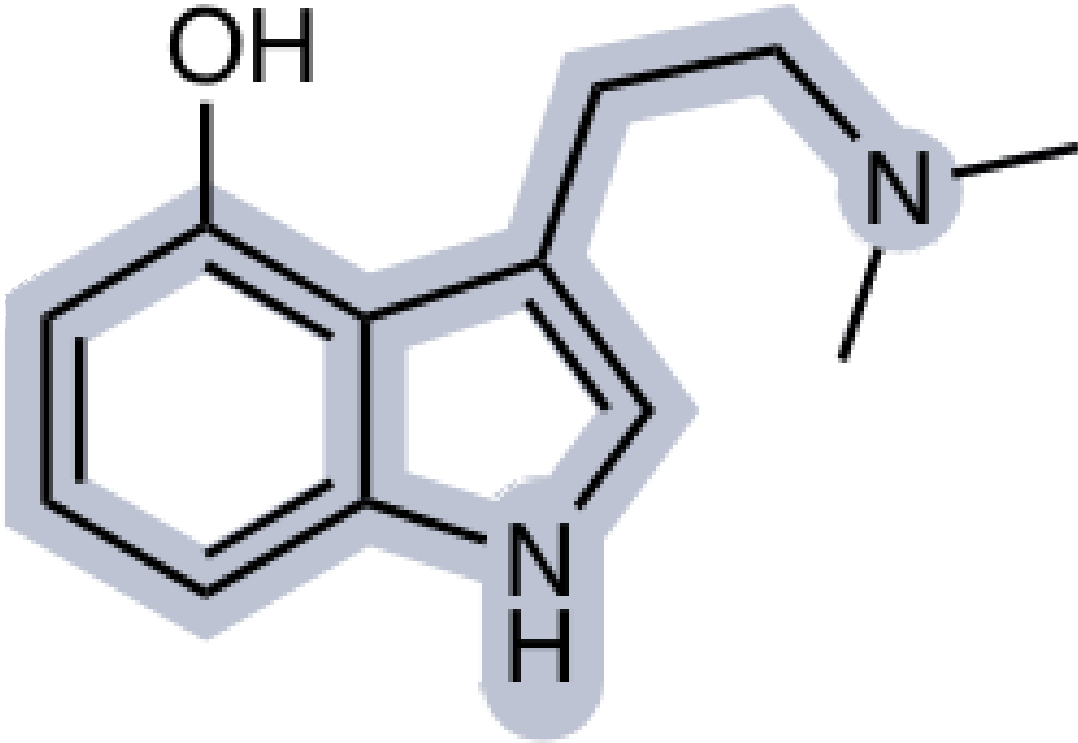
Dimethyltryptamine

DMT



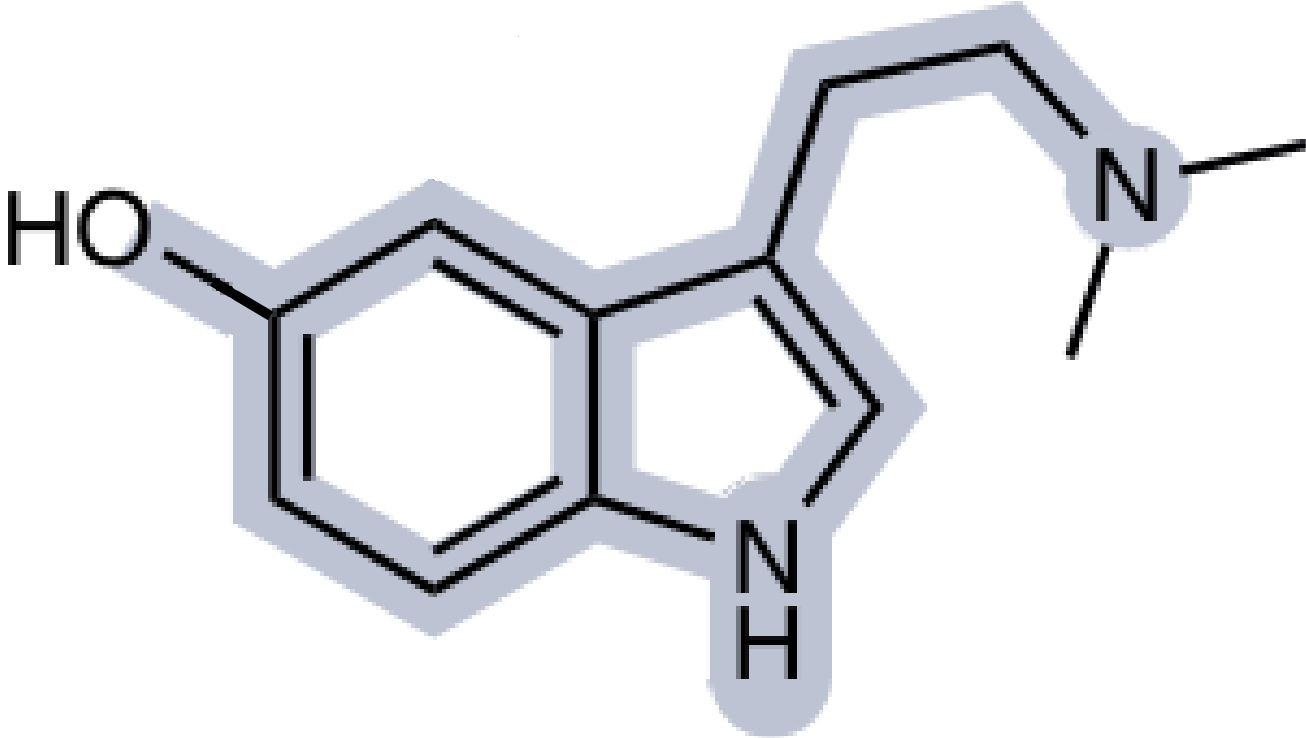
Dimethyltryptamine

Psilocin



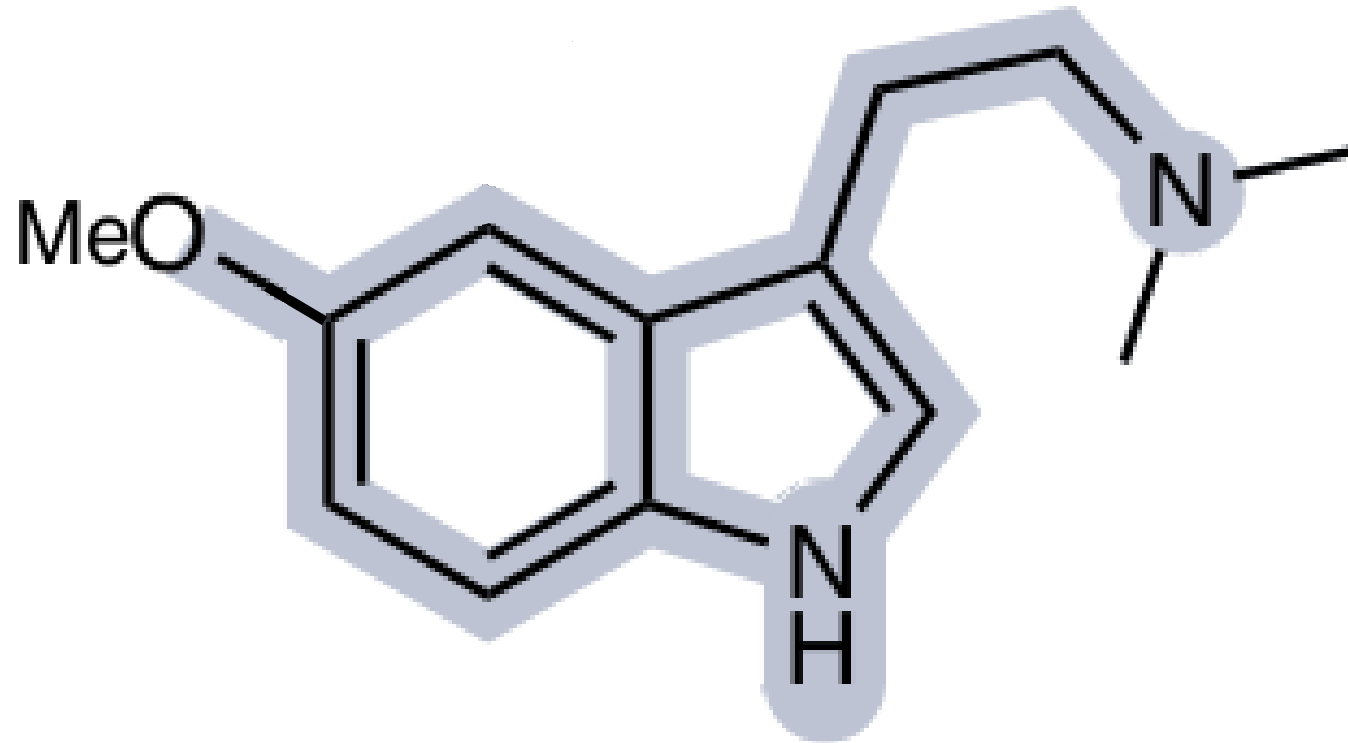
4-hydroxy-DMT

Bufotenine



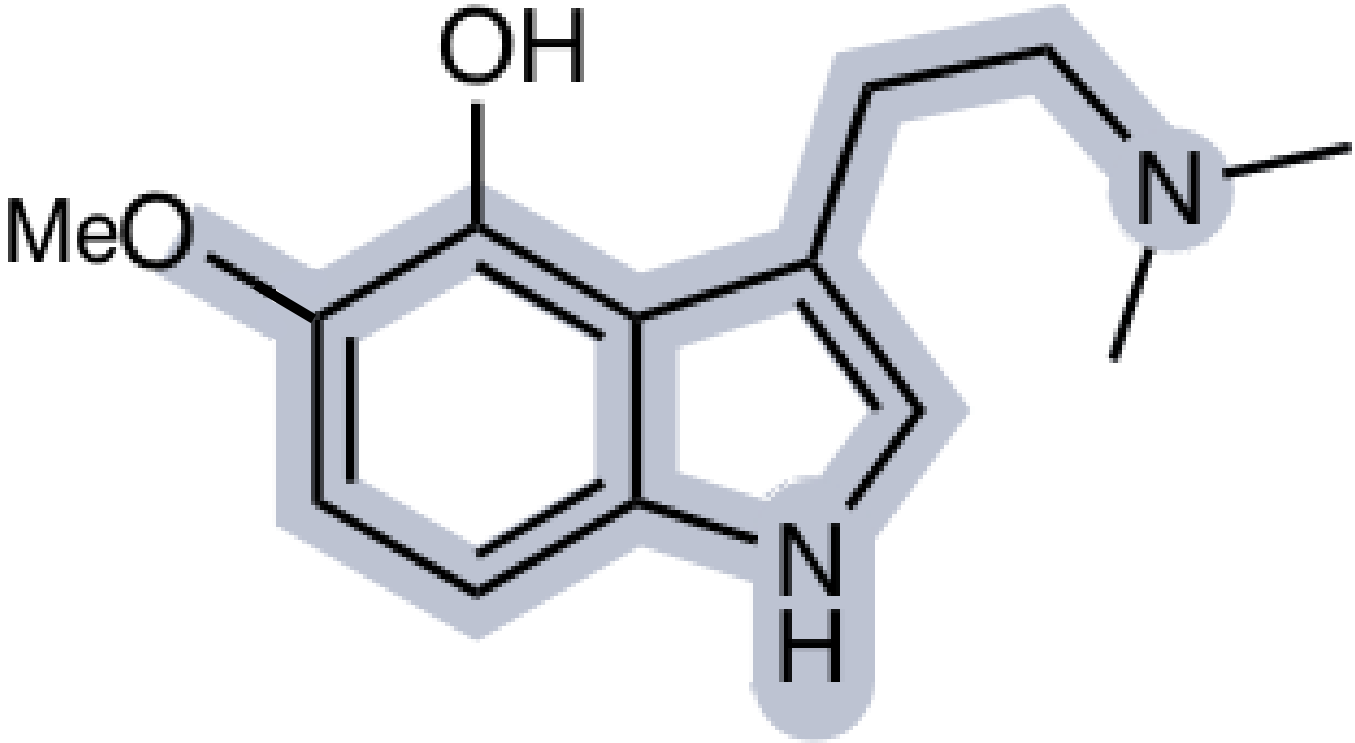
5-hydroxy-DMT

5-MeO-DMT



5-methoxy-DMT

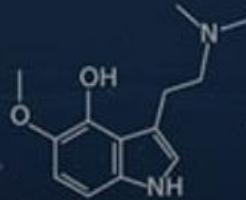
Psilomethoxin



4-hydroxy-5-methoxy-DMT

# Psilomethoxin

CHURCH OF  
PSILOMETHOXIN



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4-hydroxy-5-methoxy-DMT



# What effects do psychedelics have?

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- Visual
- Synesthesia
- Meaning enhancing
- Broadening of emotional range
- Altered sense of self
- Cognitive
- Mystical-type experiences

# What effects do psychedelics have?

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“A psychedelic drug is one which has small likelihood of causing physical addiction, craving, major physiological disturbances, delirium, disorientation, or amnesia, produces thought, mood, and perceptual changes otherwise rarely experienced except perhaps in dreams, contemplative and religious exaltation, flashes of vivid involuntary memory and acute psychoses.”

- Dr. Lester Grinspoon



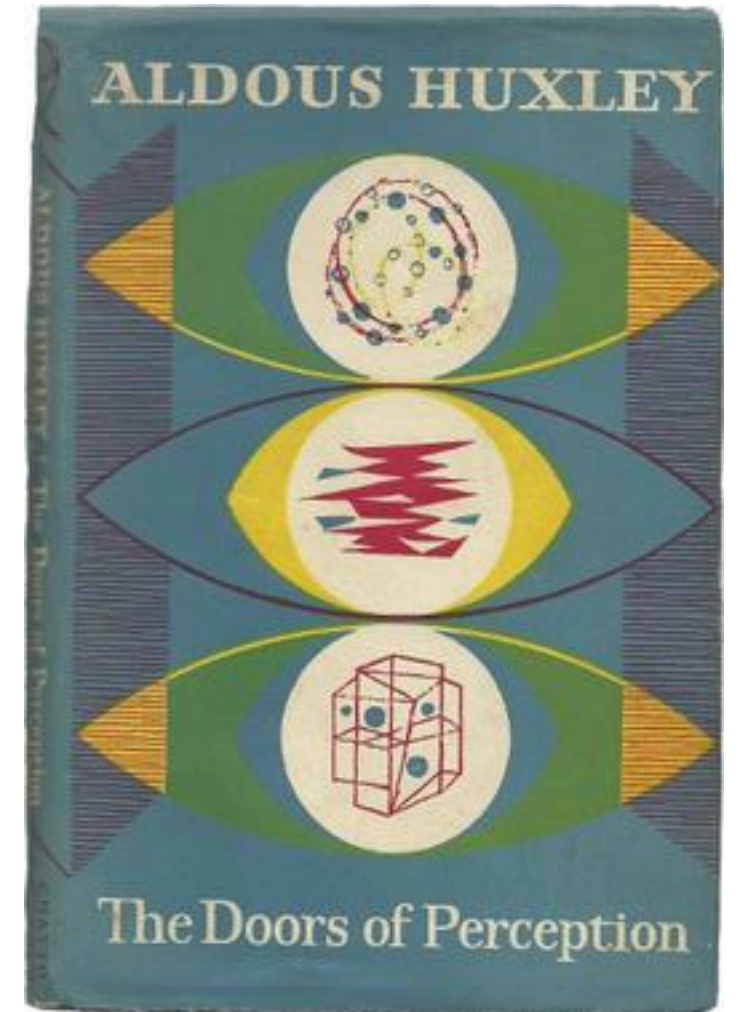
# Mystical Experiences

- Sense of unity
- Sense of sacredness
- Transcendence of time and space
- Positive mood
- Ineffability
- Noetic quality
- Selflessness

# What effects do psychedelics have?

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“I was now a Not-self, simultaneously perceiving and being the Not-self of the things around me. To this new-born Not-self, the behavior, the appearance, the very thought of the self it had momentarily ceased to be... seemed... enormously irrelevant.”



# Adverse effects

- Cardiovascular
- Headaches
- Nausea/vomiting
- Valvulopathy?
- ~~Disordered use~~
- Psychosis/Bipolar
- Psychological distress
- Behavioral consequences

# Ancient use

- Psilocybin mushrooms used in Central America, for at least hundreds of years
- *Anadenanthera* (yopo or cebil) for millennia in various parts of S America
- Ayahuasca for at least hundreds of years in the Amazon basin
- Peyote for ?thousands of years

"Truly ground-breaking... I highly recommend."  
— DOUGLAS PRESTON, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author

# THE IMMORTALITY KEY

THE SECRET  
HISTORY OF THE  
RELIGION  
WITH NO NAME

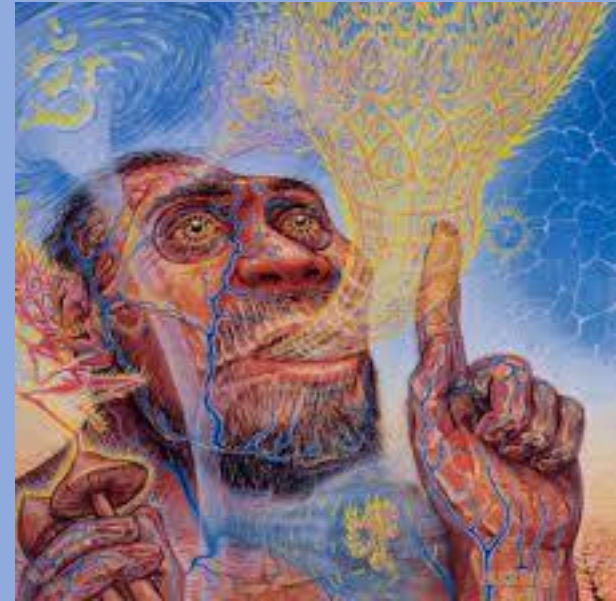


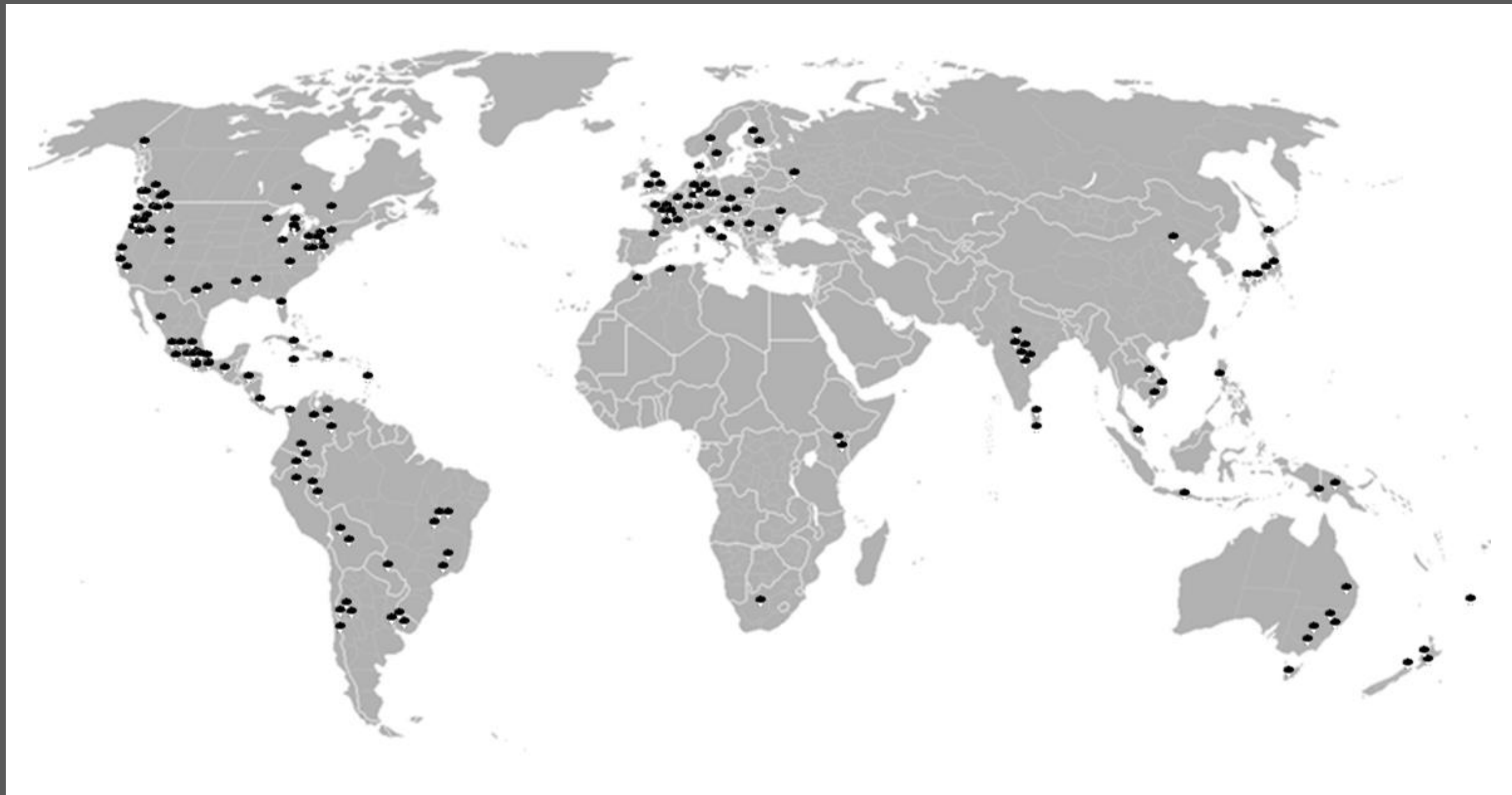
EXCLUSIVE  
BONUS  
CHAPTER

THE  
NEW YORK  
TIMES  
BESTSELLER

BRIAN C.  
MURARESKU

FOREWORD BY GRAHAM HANCOCK







# Diversity of indigenous use

- “Psychedelics are taken only in ceremony under the guidance and supervision of the shaman, or the spiritual leader of the community. The shaman would administer these compounds only for very clear circumscribed reasons, such as an initiation rite or a healing ceremony to address individuals with severe medical or psychological problems. In the shamanic world, these compounds are never taken for frivolous reasons. That would be absolutely taboo. It would be a heresy to misuse these compounds for hedonic reasons.”

- Charles Grob MD on Goop

# Diversity of indigenous use

- Shamanic use
  - Healing ceremonies
  - Witchcraft/divination
- Knowledge cultivation
- Recreational
  
- Group use

# Previous waves of research

- Peyote/mescaline (Late 1800s - ?)
- Second Wave: LSD (1950s-1970s)
- Psychedelic renaissance (2000s)



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- Peyote/mescaline (Late 1800s - ?)
- Second Wave: LSD (1950s-1970s)
- Psychedelic renaissance (2000s)

# Modern models in research (Second Wave on)

- CIA research
- Gay conversion therapy
  
- Psychotomimetic
- Chemotherapeutic
  
- Psychedelic

# Lessons learned from Second Wave

- “Set and Setting” / context dependency

# Context dependency

- “The responses described in clinical experiments on Whites are so different from the responses described by Indian Peyotists... as to fall into completely different categories. They do not seem to be talking about the same thing” (Slotkin, 1956)

**Slotkin J.** The peyote religion. Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press; 1956.

**Wallace A.** Cultural Determinants of Response to Hallucinatory Experience  
Archives of General Psychiatry. 1959;1(1):58.



# Context dependency

- In this era, white participants who took peyote in a research setting had experiences characterized by suspiciousness, feelings of meaninglessness and distress, “hallucinations largely idiosyncratic in content”, and a general lack of therapeutic benefits.

**Slotkin J.** The peyote religion. Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press; 1956.

**Wallace A.** Cultural Determinants of Response to Hallucinatory Experience  
Archives of General Psychiatry. 1959;1(1):58.

# Context dependency

- In contrast, American Indian peyotists generally took the cactus in a ceremonial setting, with a presumption of a meaningful, beneficial experience and had therapeutic benefits and “welcome feelings of contact with a new, more meaningful... reality prefigured in doctrinal knowledge” (Wallace, 1959)

**Slotkin J.** The peyote religion. Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press; 1956.

**Wallace A.** Cultural Determinants of Response to Hallucinatory Experience  
Archives of General Psychiatry. 1959;1(1):58.

# Lessons learned from Second Wave

- “Set and Setting” / context dependency
- Extensive psychological support

# Osmond Saskatchewan alcohol trials

- Initial rationale:
  - Psychotomimetic
  - Mimic Delirium Tremens
  - “hit rock bottom”



# Lessons learned from Second Wave

- “Set and Setting” / context dependency
- Extensive psychological support
- Music
- Basic clinical ethics (what not to do)
  
- Attitude of experiential acceptance (“Trust, let go, be open”)

# I. Empirical studies

- a. Effect sizes
- b. Depression
- c. Tobacco smoking
- d. Palliative

# Effect sizes

- Within group (psilocybin)
- Between group (psilocybin vs placebo)

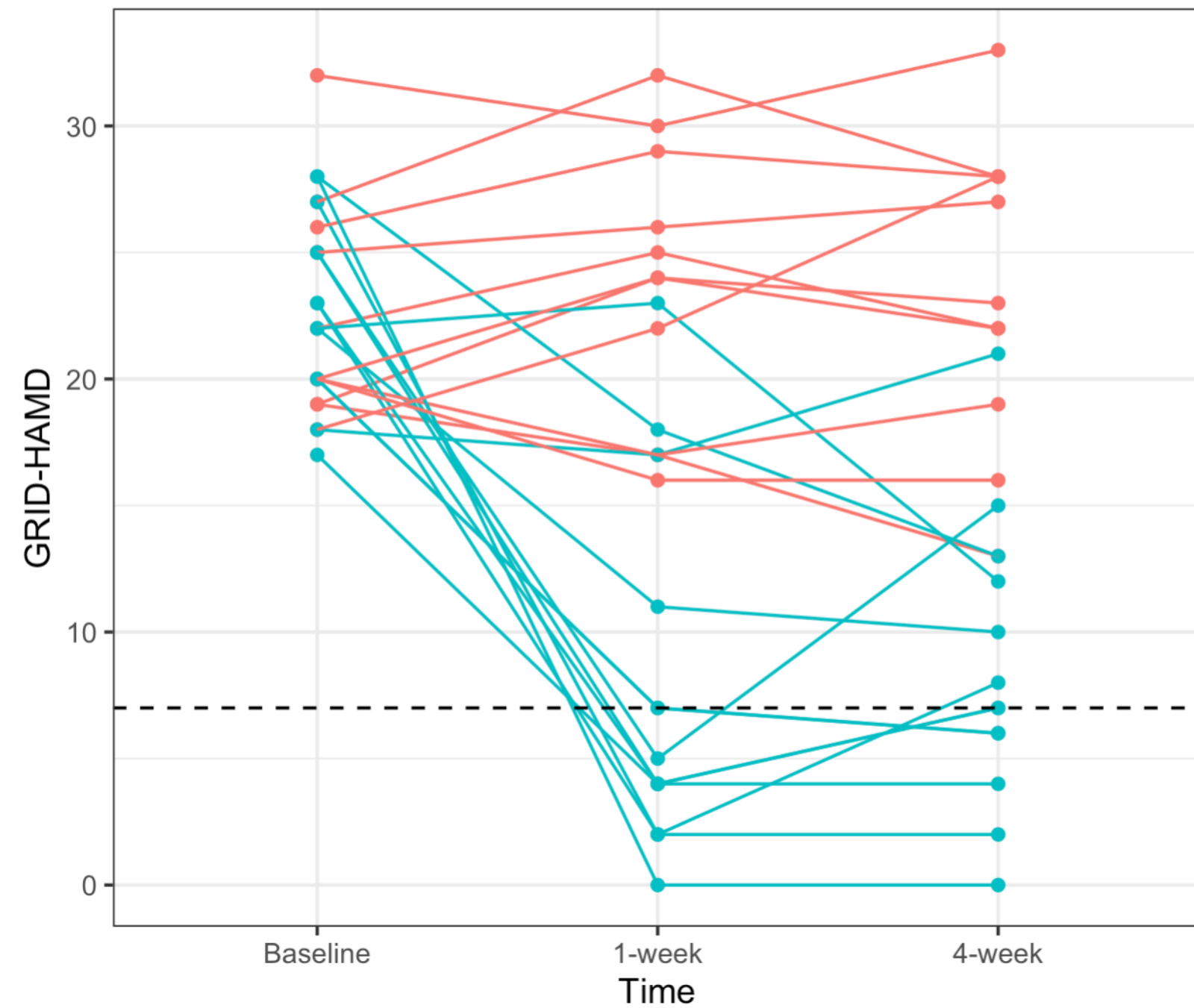
# Effect size in placebo groups in MDD trials (within-group)

- Meta-analysis (n = 96) of placebo effect size in MDD = 1.6 (Rieff et al., 2009)
  - TRD = 1.1 (Jones et al., 2021)



# RCT of psychedelic for MDD

- Johns Hopkins open-label waitlist control (Davis et al., 2021)
- Brazilian ayahuasca for TRD (Palhano-Fontes et al., 2019)
- Imperial college psilocybin vs escitalopram (Carhart-Harris et al., 2021)
- Compass Phase 2 TRD trial (Goodwin et al., 2022)
- U of Zurich psilocybin vs placebo for MDD



Condition  
—●— Waitlist  
—●— Immediate

# Davis et al. (2021) - Remission

<b>Drug</b>	<b>Remission (%)</b>
Psilocybin	45%
Waitlist	0%

# Davis et al., (2021)

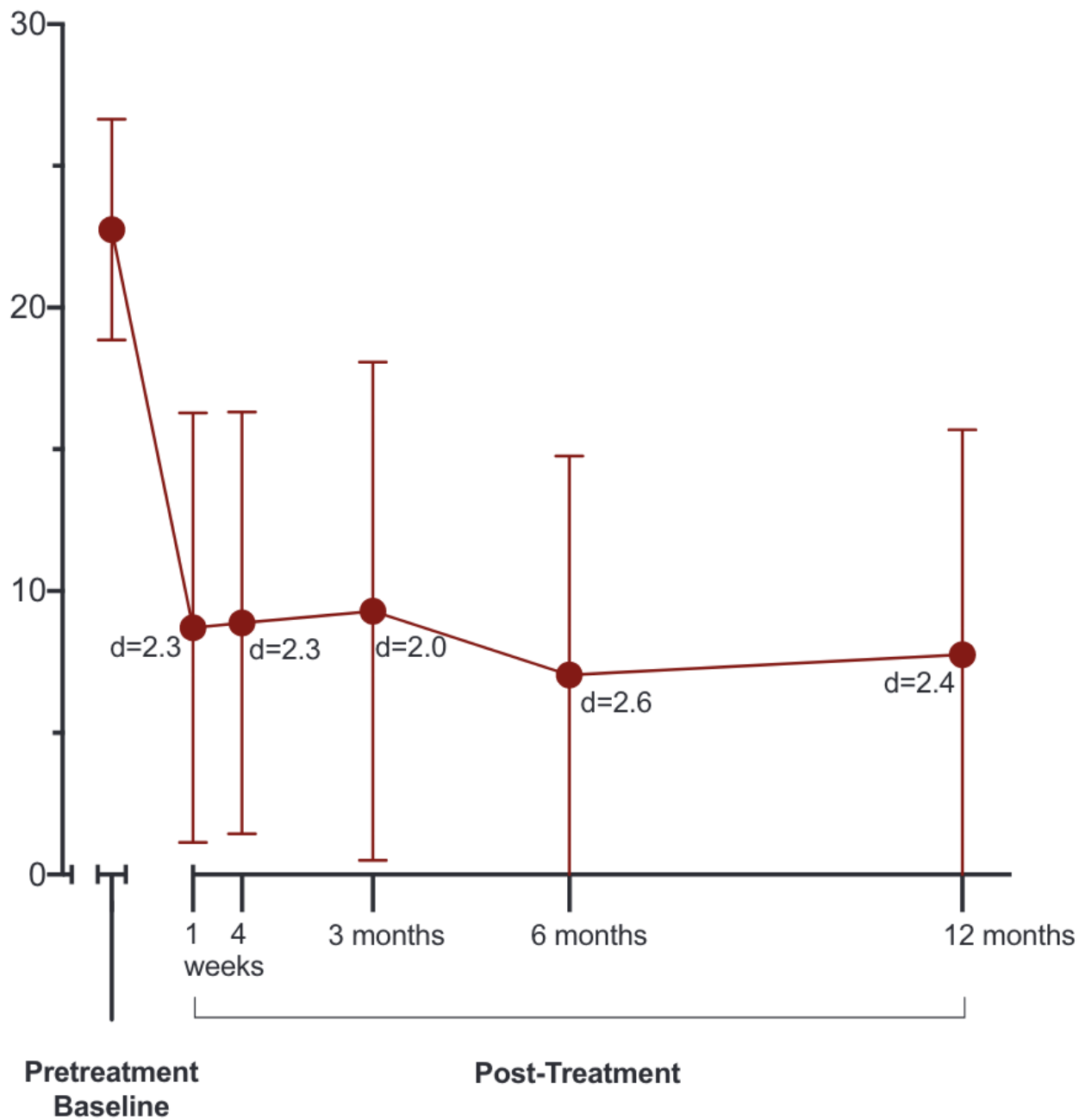
- Between group effect size:  $d = 2.6$  at 4 weeks post 2<sup>nd</sup> session
- Within group effect size
  - Waitlist:  $d = -0.2$

# Davis et al., (2021)

- Between group effect size:  $d = 2.6$  at 4 weeks post 2<sup>nd</sup> session
- Within group effect size
  - Waitlist:  $d = -0.2$
- Remember: average placebo group effect size in MDD = 1.6 (Rieff et al., 2009)



Depression Scores  
(GRID-HAMD)

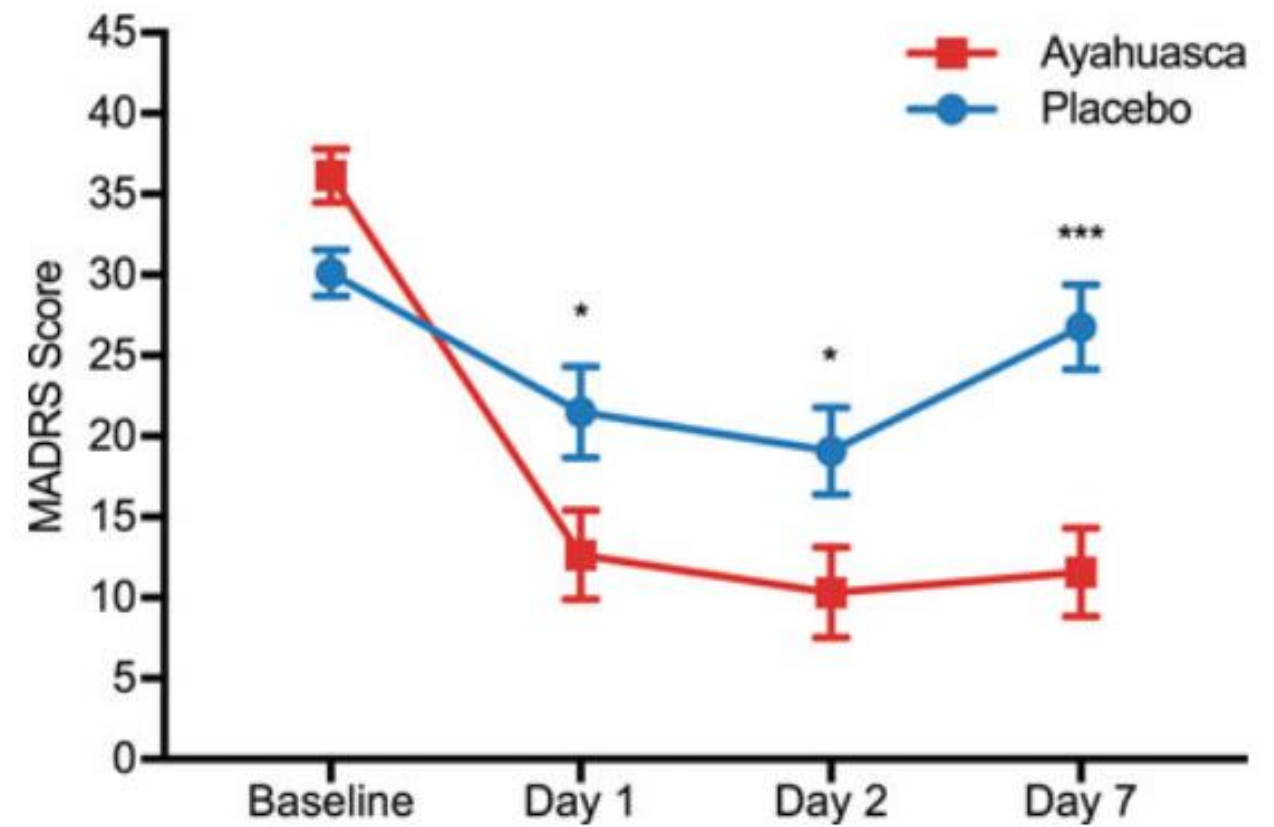
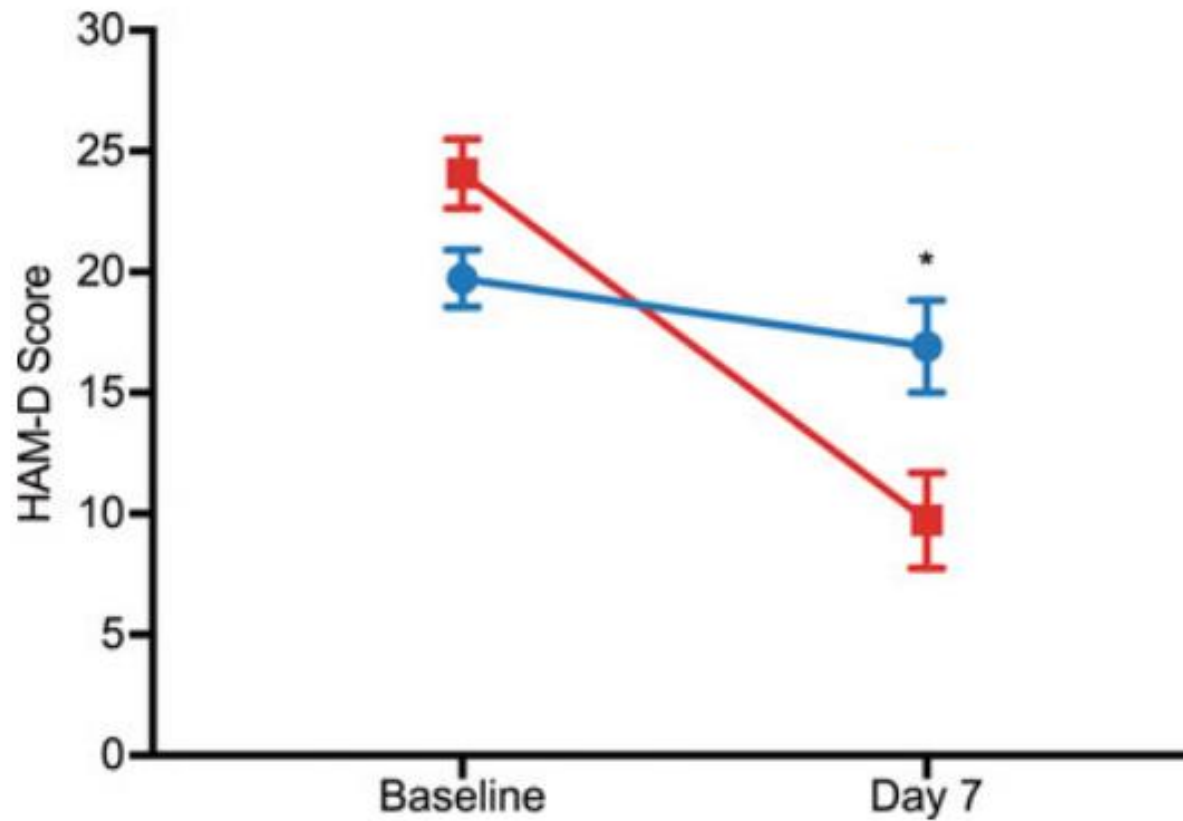


12-mo f/u

# Palhano-Fontes et al. (2019)

- N = 29 TRD
- Moderate to severe (HAMD > 16)
- 76% personality disorder dx
- Mostly clinician referred
- Ayahuasca vs placebo (sham ayahuasca)

# Palhano-Fontes et al. (2019)





# Palhano-Fontes et al. (2019) - Remission

<b>Drug</b>	<b>Remission (%)</b>
Ayahuasca	36%
Placebo	7%

# Palhano-Fontes et al. (2019)

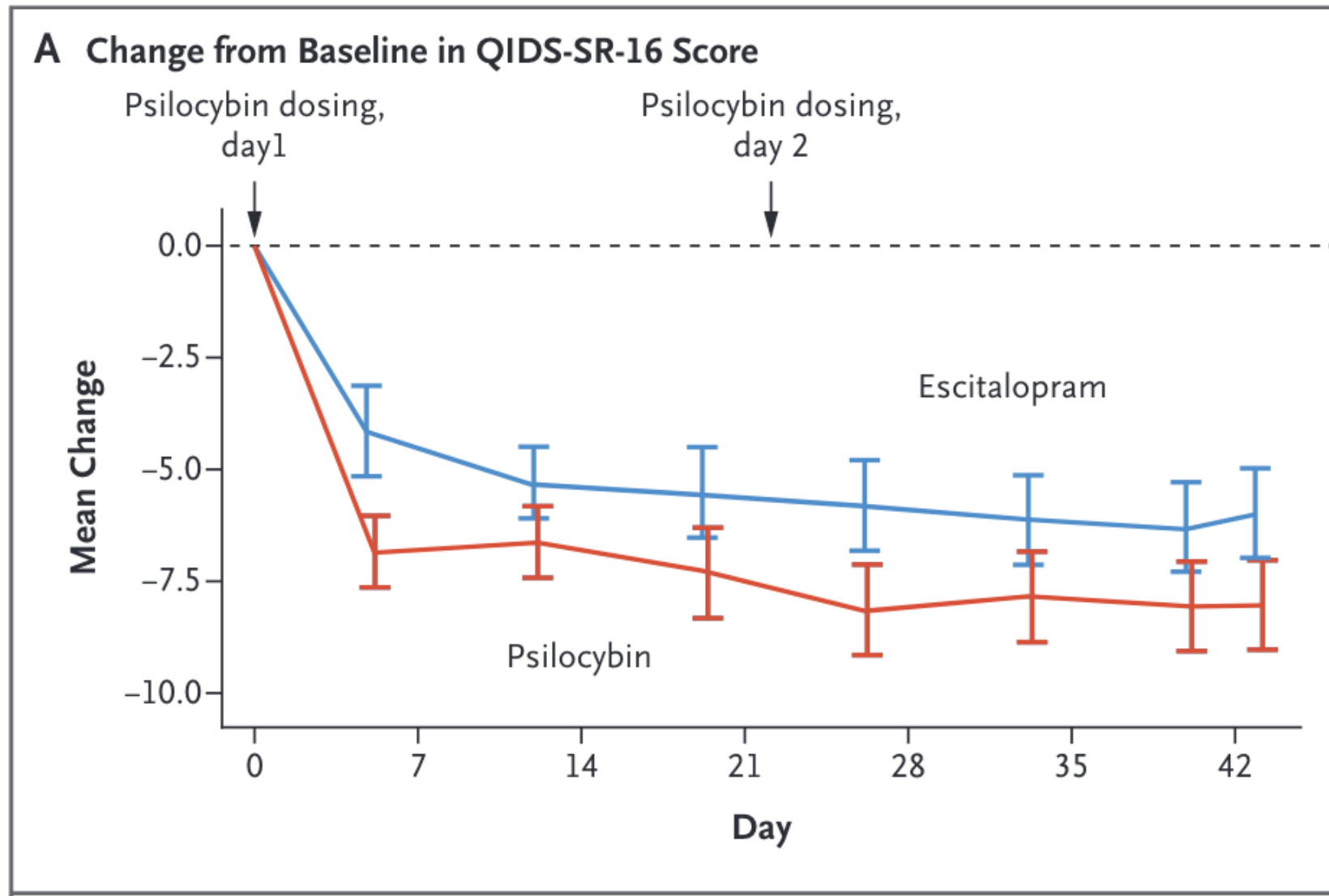
- Between group effect size:  $d = 1.0$
- Within group effect size
  - Placebo:  $d = 0.5$

# Palhano-Fontes et al. (2019)

- Between group effect size:  $d = 1.0$
- Within group effect size
  - Placebo:  $d = 0.5$
- Meta-analysis of placebo group effect size in TRD:  $g = 1.1$  (Jones et al., 2021)



**Imperial College  
London**

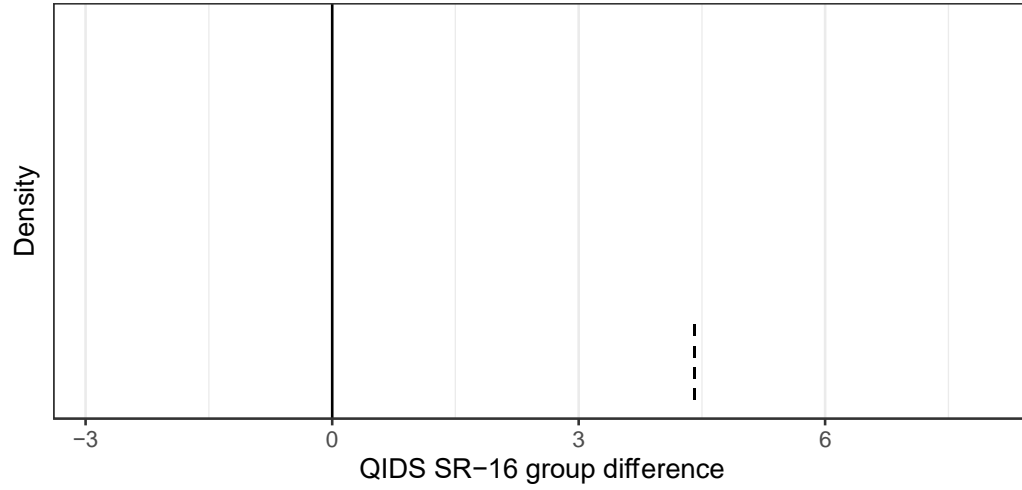


(Carhart-Harris et al., 2021)

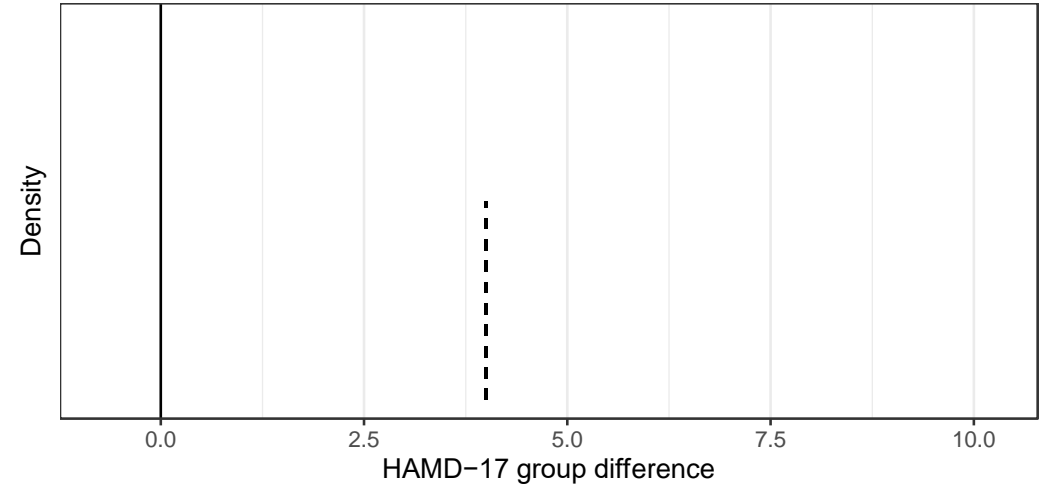
# Carhart-Harris et al. (2021) - Remission

<b>Drug</b>	<b>Remission (%)</b>
Psilocybin	57%
Escitalopram	28%

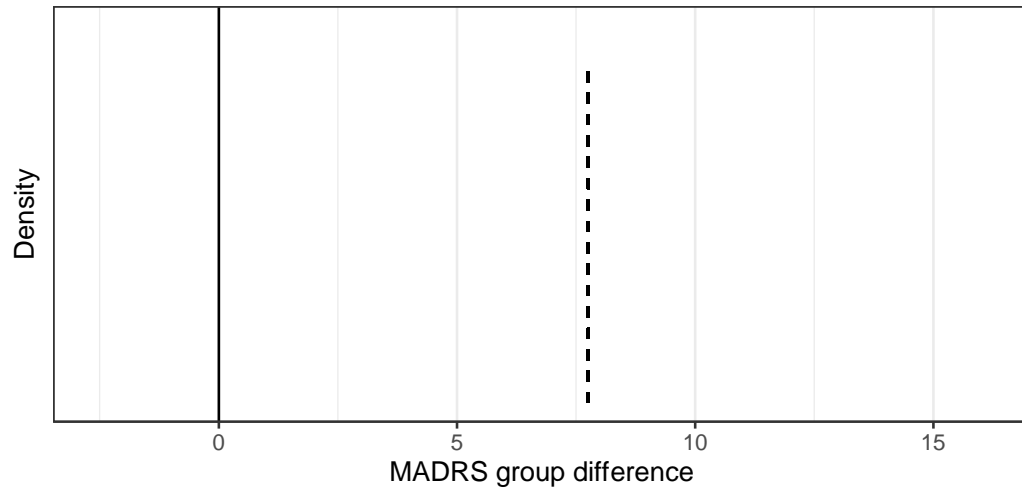
A QIDS SR-16 posterior distribution of group difference  
Skeptical Prior



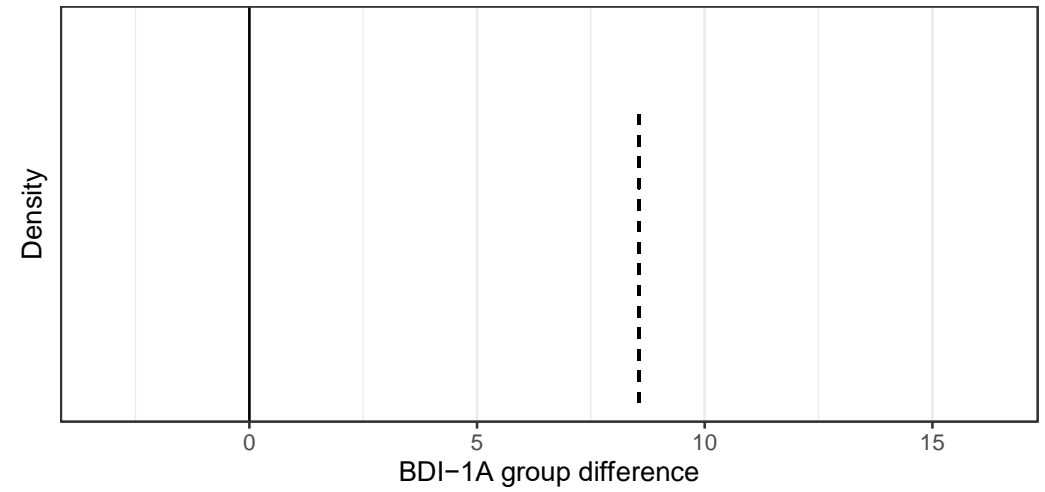
B HAMD-17 posterior distribution of group difference  
Skeptical Prior



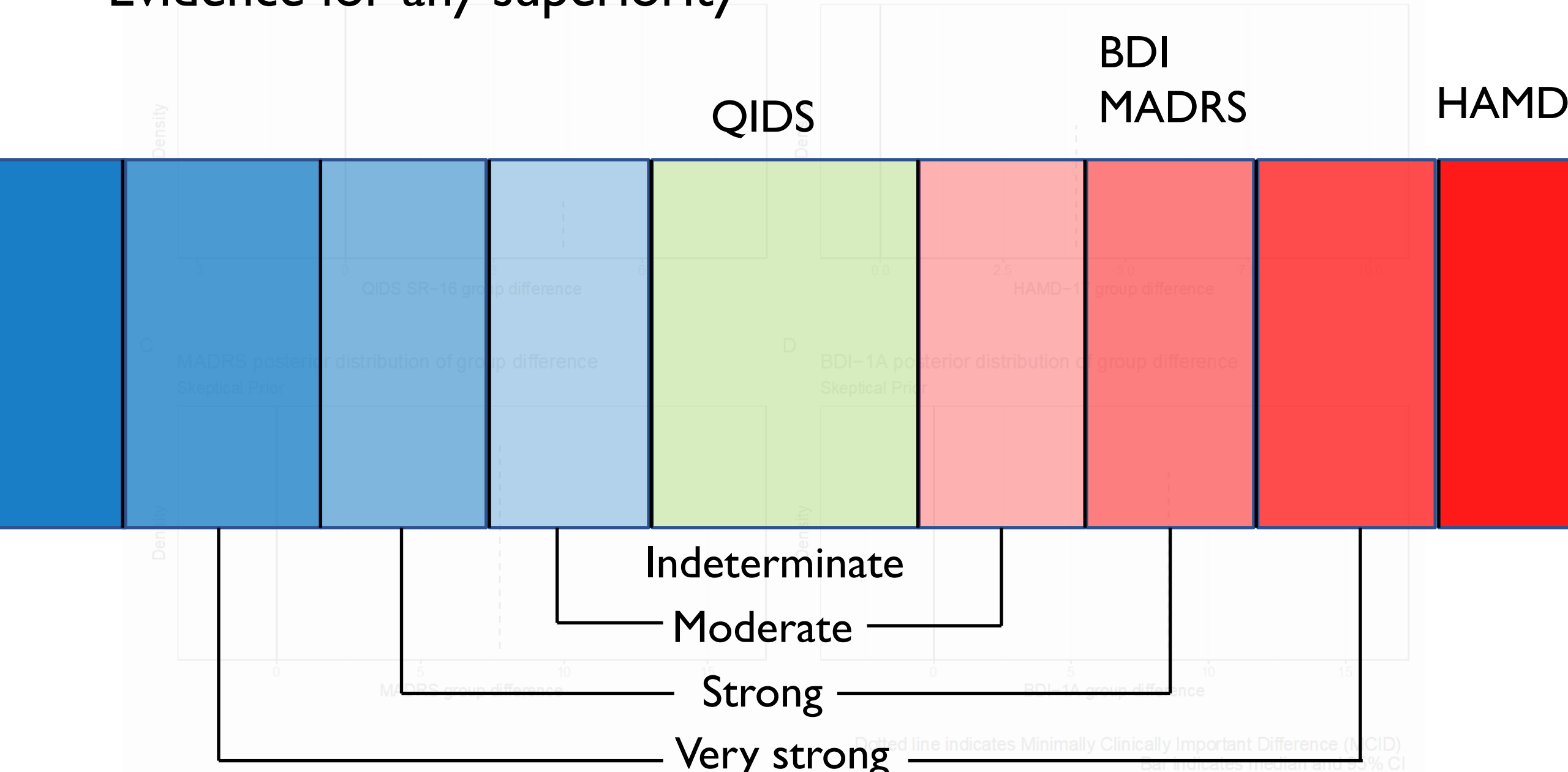
C MADRS posterior distribution of group difference  
Skeptical Prior



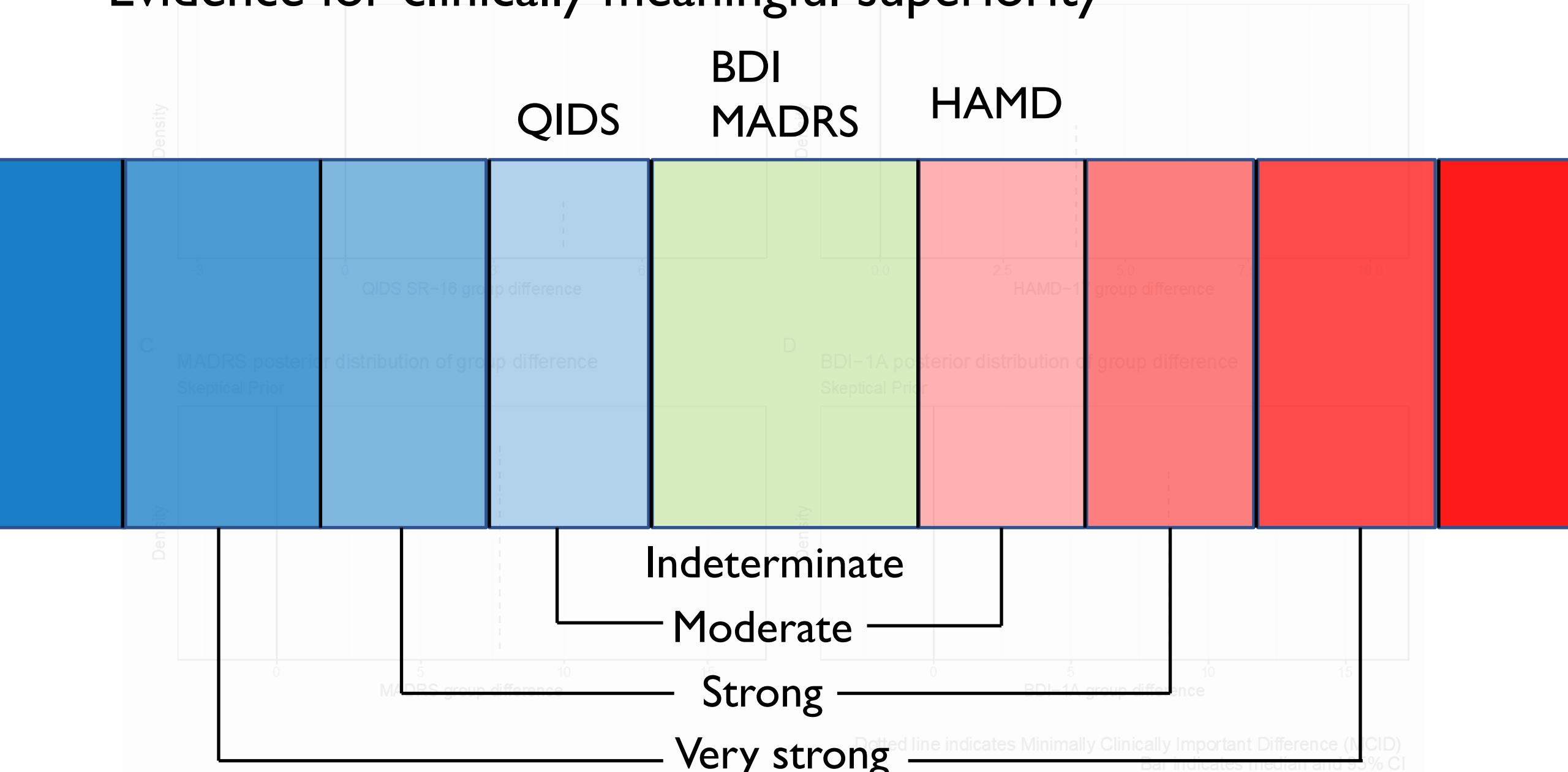
D BDI-1A posterior distribution of group difference  
Skeptical Prior



# Evidence for any superiority



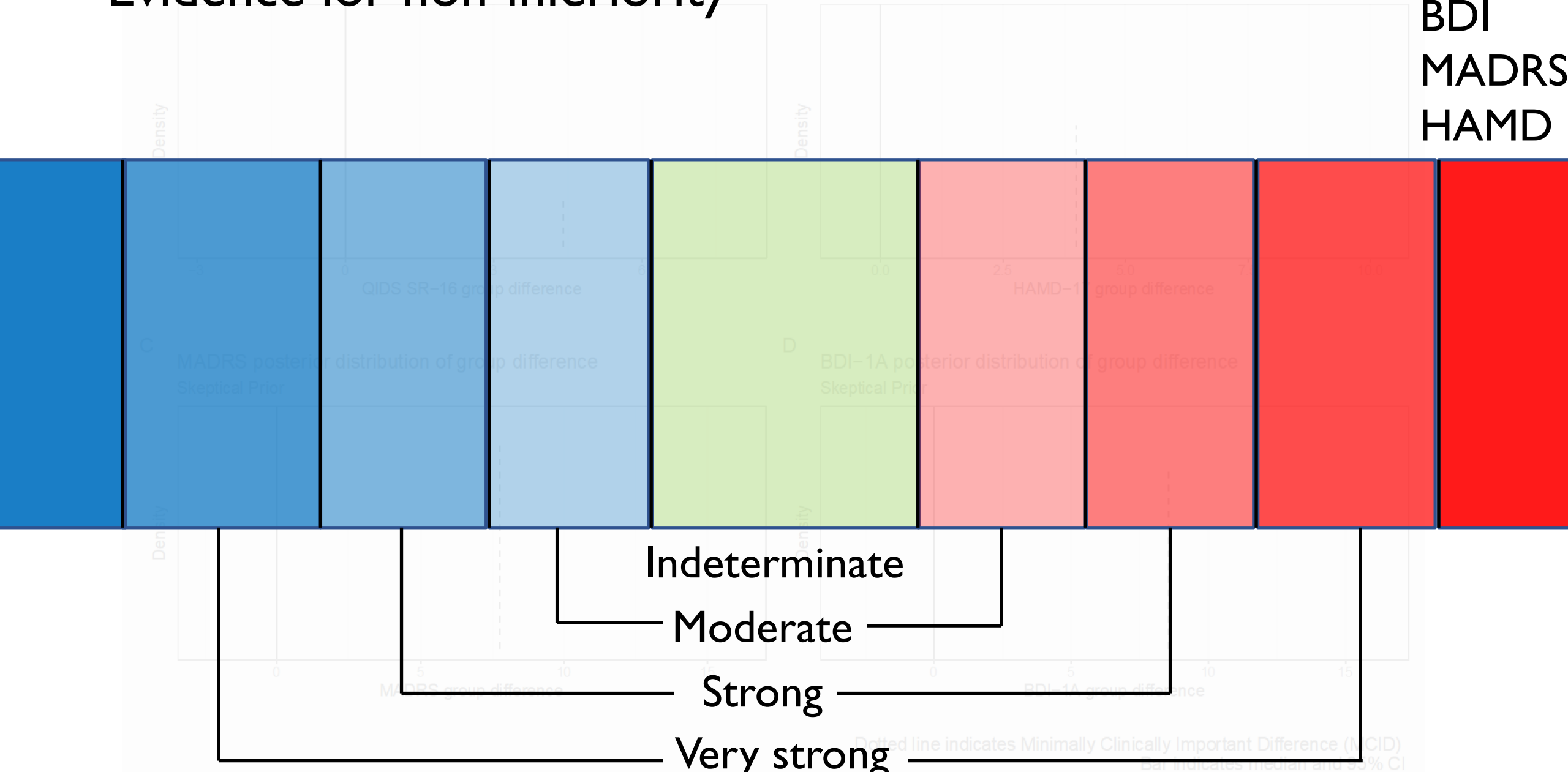
# Evidence for clinically meaningful superiority



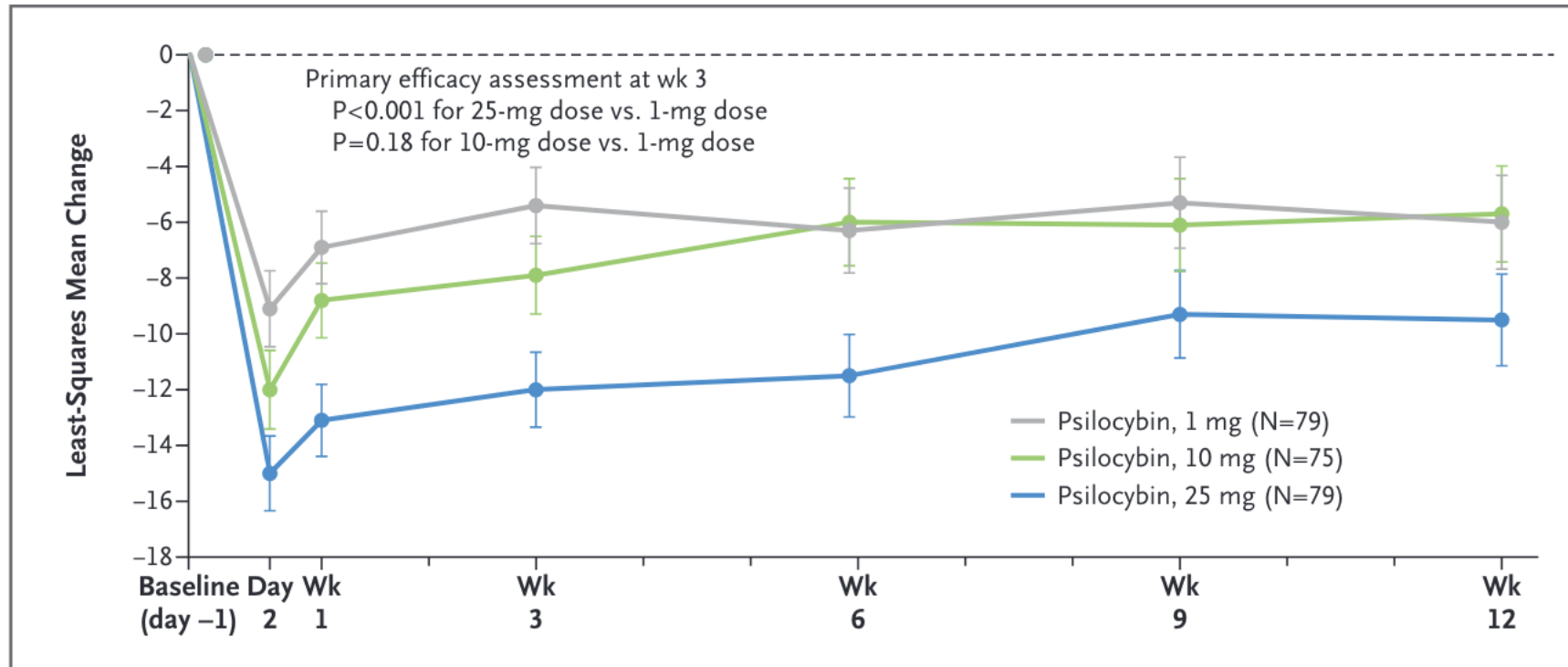


# Evidence for non-inferiority

QIDS  
BDI  
MADRS  
HAM-D



# Compass Phase 2 – Goodwin et al., (2022)



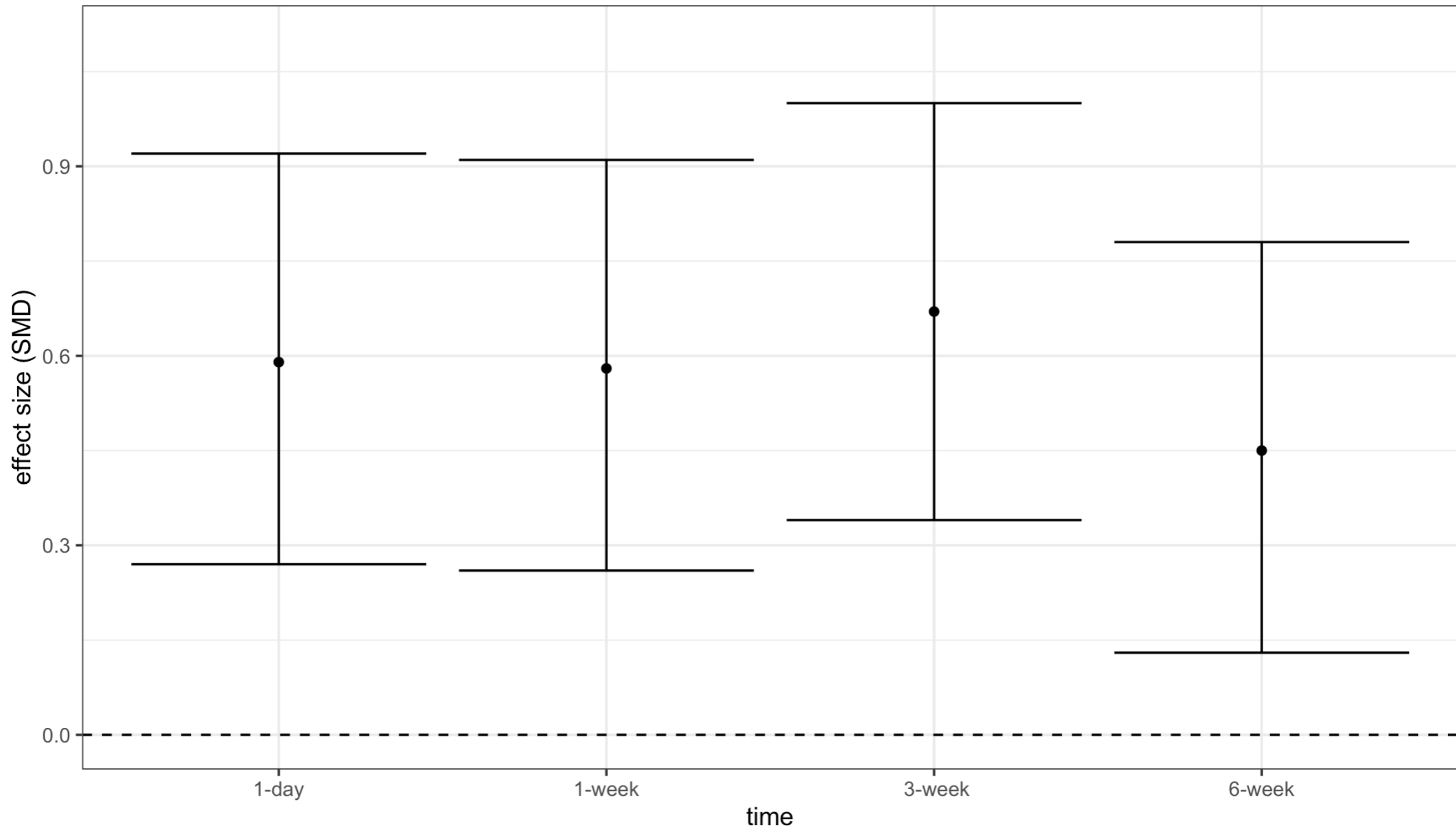
**Figure 2.** Change from Baseline in MADRS Total Score (Modified Intention-to-Treat Population).

Total scores on the Montgomery–Åsberg Depression Rating Scale (MADRS) range from 0 to 60, with higher scores indicating greater severity of depression. I bars represent standard errors.

# Compass Phase 2- Remission

<b>Drug</b>	<b>Remission (%) 3-week</b>	<b>Remission (%) 12-week</b>
Psilocybin 25mg	29%	27%
Psilocybin 10mg	9%	7%
Psilocybin 1mg	8%	11%

Goodwin et al., 2022 -- effect sizes over time



**Table 3.** Adverse Events Reported on Day 1, from Day 2 up to Week 3, and after Week 3 up to Week 12 (Safety Population).\*

Adverse Event	Psilocybin, 25 mg (N = 79)	Psilocybin, 10 mg (N = 75)	Psilocybin, 1 mg (N = 79)
	<i>number (percent)</i>		
<b>Day 2 up to wk 3</b>			
Any serious adverse event	4 (5)	4 (5)	0
Suicidal ideation	2 (3)	2 (3)	0
Intentional self-injury	2 (3)	1 (1)	0
Hospitalization	0	1 (1)	0
<b>After wk 3 up to wk 12</b>			
Any serious adverse event	4 (5)	3 (4)	1 (1)
Suicidal behavior	3 (4)	0	0
Intentional self-injury	0	1 (1)	1 (1)
Adjustment disorder with anxiety and depressed mood	1 (1)	0	0
Depression	0	1 (1)	0
Drug withdrawal syndrome†	1 (1)	0	0
Suicidal ideation	0	1 (1)	0

Compass  
Phase 2-  
Serious  
adverse  
events

**Table 3.** Adverse Events Reported on Day 1, from Day 2 up to Week 3, and after Week 3 up to Week 12 (Safety Population).\*

Adverse Event	Psilocybin, 25 mg (N=79)	Psilocybin, 10 mg (N=75)	Psilocybin, 1 mg (N=79)
	<i>number (percent)</i>		
<b>Day 2 up to wk 3</b>			
Any serious adverse event	4 (5)	4 (5)	0
Suicidal ideation	2 (3)	2 (3)	0
Intentional self-injury	2 (3)	1 (1)	0
Hospitalization	0	1 (1)	0
<b>After wk 3 up to wk 12</b>			
Any serious adverse event	4 (5)	3 (4)	1 (1)
Suicidal behavior	3 (4)	0	0
Intentional self-injury	0	1 (1)	1 (1)
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Depression	0	1 (1)	0
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Compass  
Phase 2-  
Serious  
adverse  
events

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Suicidal behavior	3 (4)	0	0
Intentional self-injury	0	1 (1)	1 (1)
Adjustment disorder with anxiety and depressed mood	1 (1)	0	0
Depression	0	1 (1)	0
Drug withdrawal syndrome†	1 (1)	0	0
Suicidal ideation	0	1 (1)	0

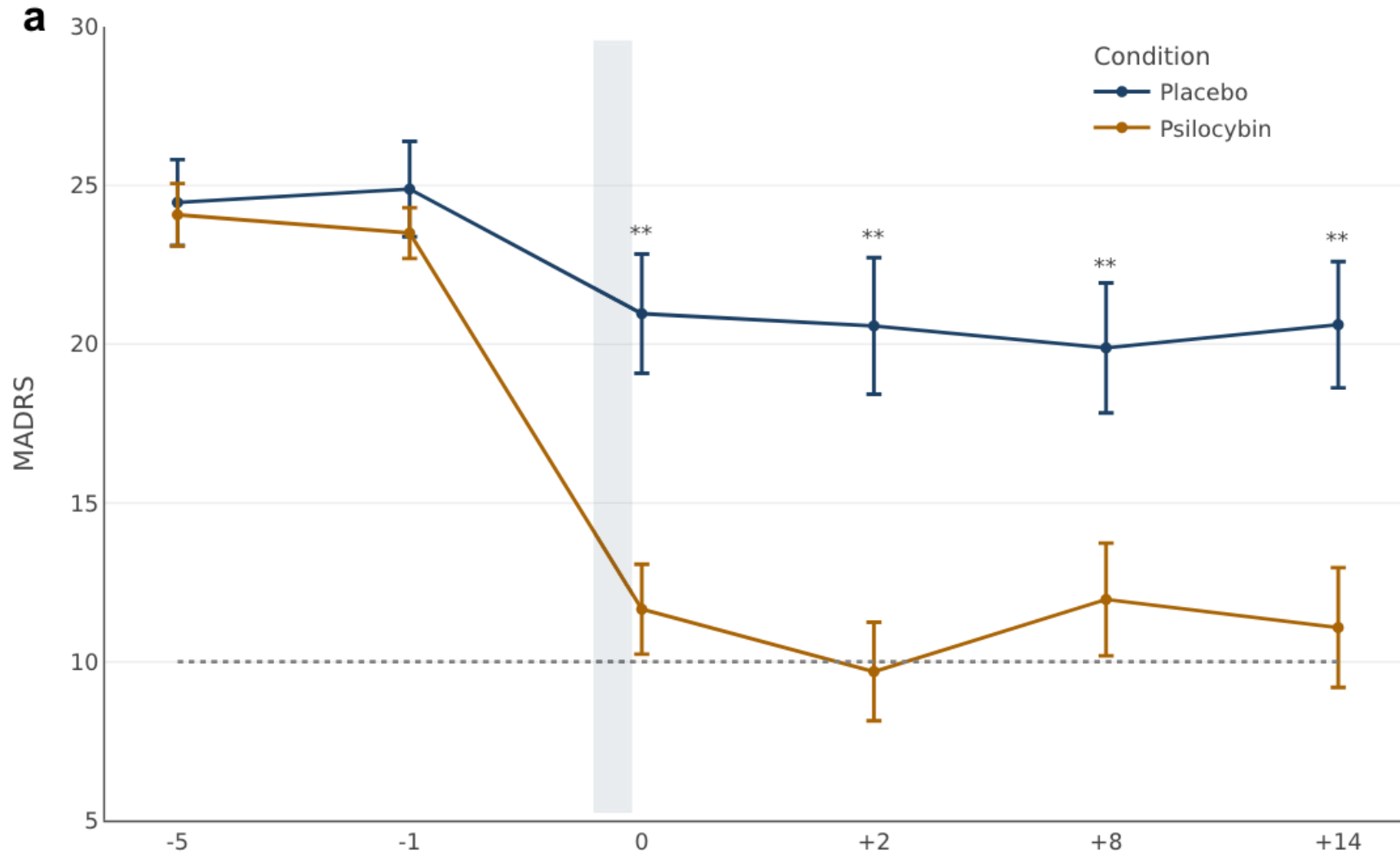
Compass  
Phase 2-  
Serious  
adverse  
events

# Von Rotz et al., 2023

- N = 52 MDD
- Single dose psilocybin (0.215 mg/kg psilocybin = 15mg for 70kg) vs placebo
- 14-day primary outcome



# Von Rotz et al., 2023 - MADRS



# Von Rotz et al., (2023) – Effect sizes

- Between group effect size:  $d = 1.0$

# Von Rotz et al., (2023) - Remission

<b>Drug</b>	<b>Remission (%)</b>
Psilocybin ~ 15mg/70kg	54%
Placebo	12%

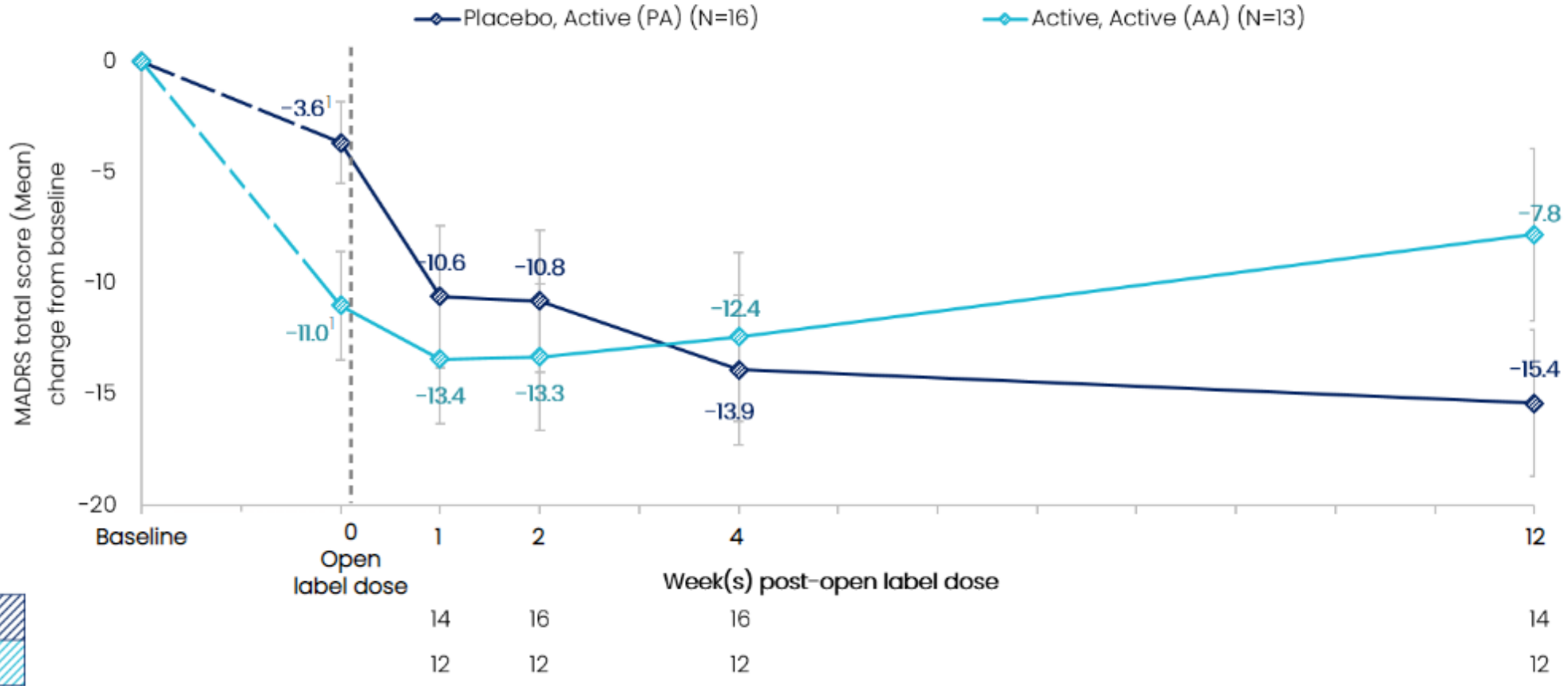
	<b>Davis (2021)</b>	<b>Palhano -Fontes (2016)</b>	<b>Carhart- Harris (2021)</b>	<b>Compas s (2022)</b>	<b>Von Rotz (2023)</b>
Effect size b/w group	2.6	1.0	0.4	0.7	1.0
Time	1-month post session 2	7-days	6-weeks after 1 <sup>st</sup> dose	3 weeks	2 weeks

	<b>Davis (2021)</b>	<b>Palhano -Fontes (2016)</b>	<b>Carhart- Harris (2021)</b>	<b>Compas s (2022)</b>	<b>Von Rotz (2023)</b>
Remissio n - drug	45%	36%	57%	29%	54%
Remissio n – control	0%	7%	28%	8%	12%
Remissio n diff	45%	29%	29%	21%	42%

	<b>Davis (2021)</b>	<b>Palhano- Fontes (2016)</b>	<b>Carhart- Harris (2021)</b>	<b>Compas s (2022)</b>	<b>Von Rotz (2023)</b>
<b>Time</b>	1-month post session 2	7-days	6-weeks after 1 <sup>st</sup> dose	3 weeks	2 weeks
<b>Interv.</b>	25mg psil x2 vs waitlist	Aya (lowish dose) vs PCB; TRD	25mg psil x 2 vs ESC	25mg psil vs 1mg psil; TRD	~15mg/70 kg psil vs PCB

# Change in MADRS over time

One and two dose regimens of IV SPL026 with supportive therapy show **lasting reduction in depression symptoms**



# Other trials

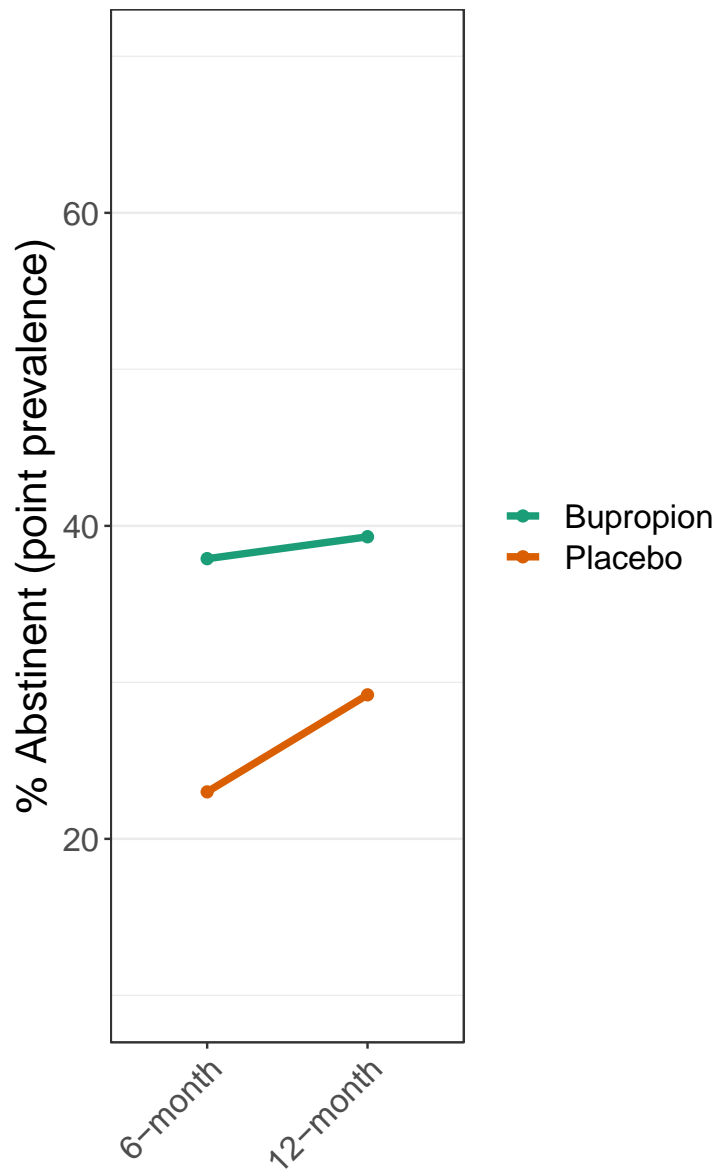
- Completed
  - Usona Phase 2 MDD
- Ongoing
  - EPIsoDE (Germany)
  - MDD-AUD
  - PsiDeR (Kings' College London)



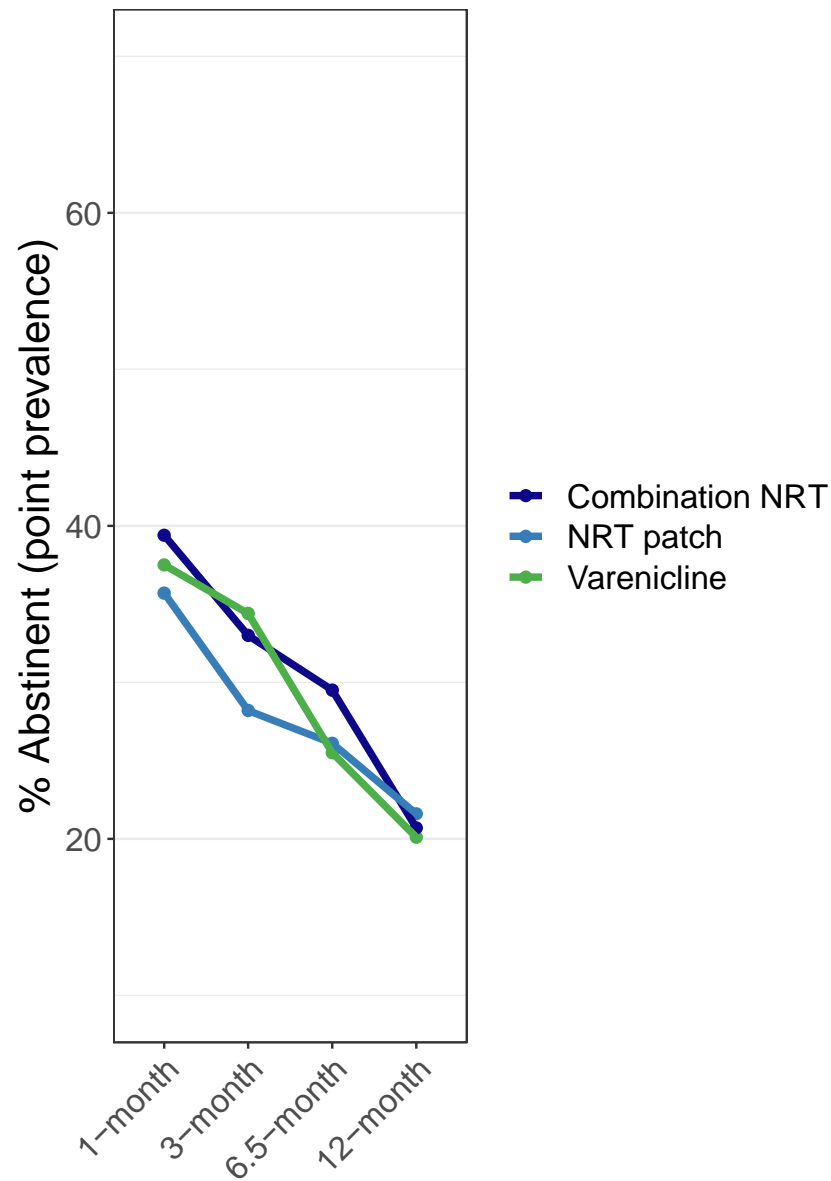
# Critiques of psychedelic clinical trials

- De facto unblinding
- Driven by expectancy effects
  - Enthusiastic participants
  - Disappointed placebo group

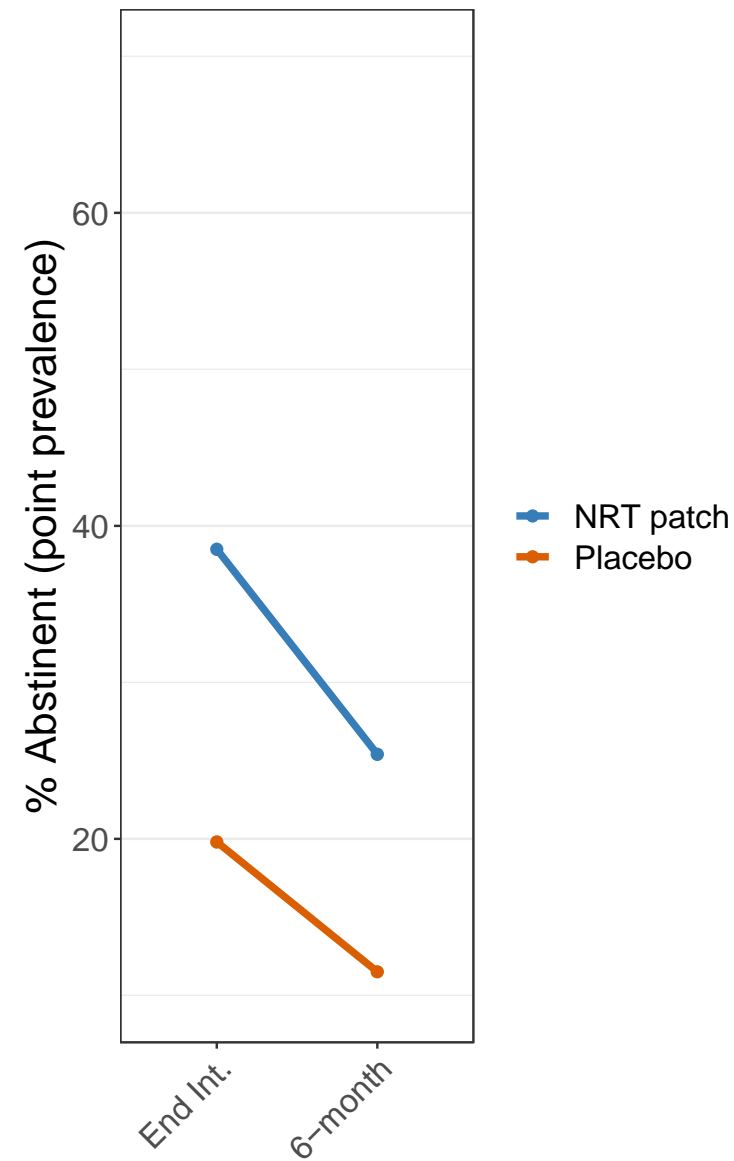
Paszek et al., 2017  
Meta-analysis:  
5 bupropion trials



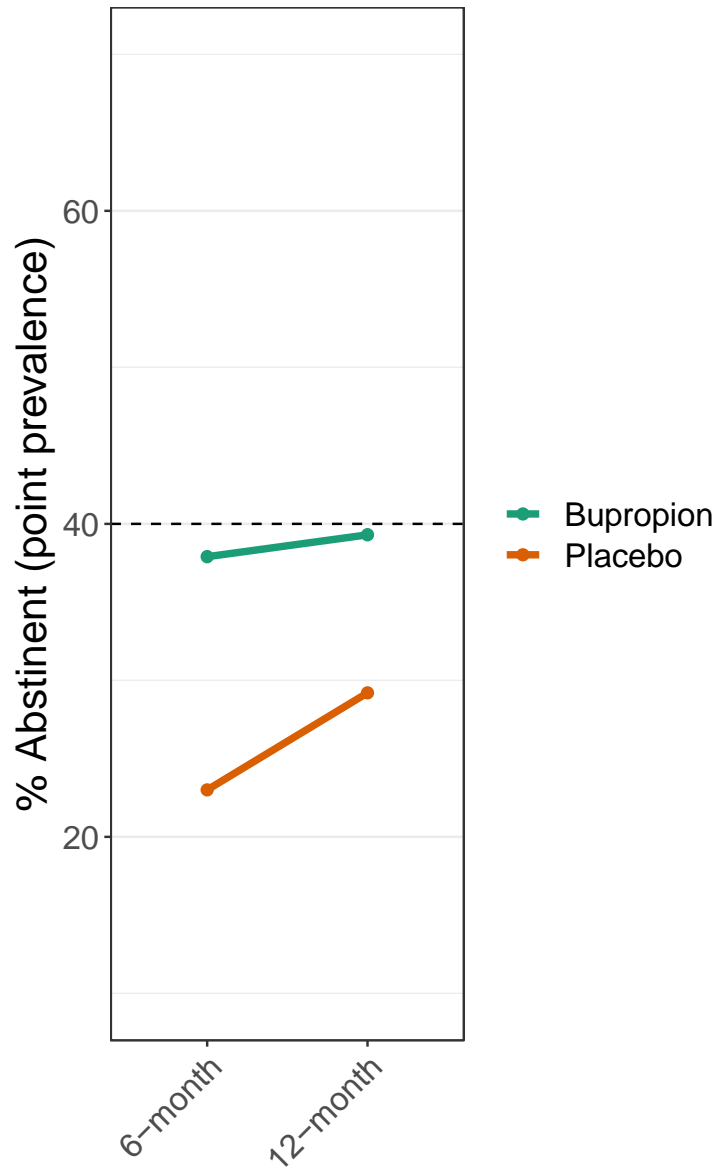
Baker et al., 2016  
Varenicline vs. NRT



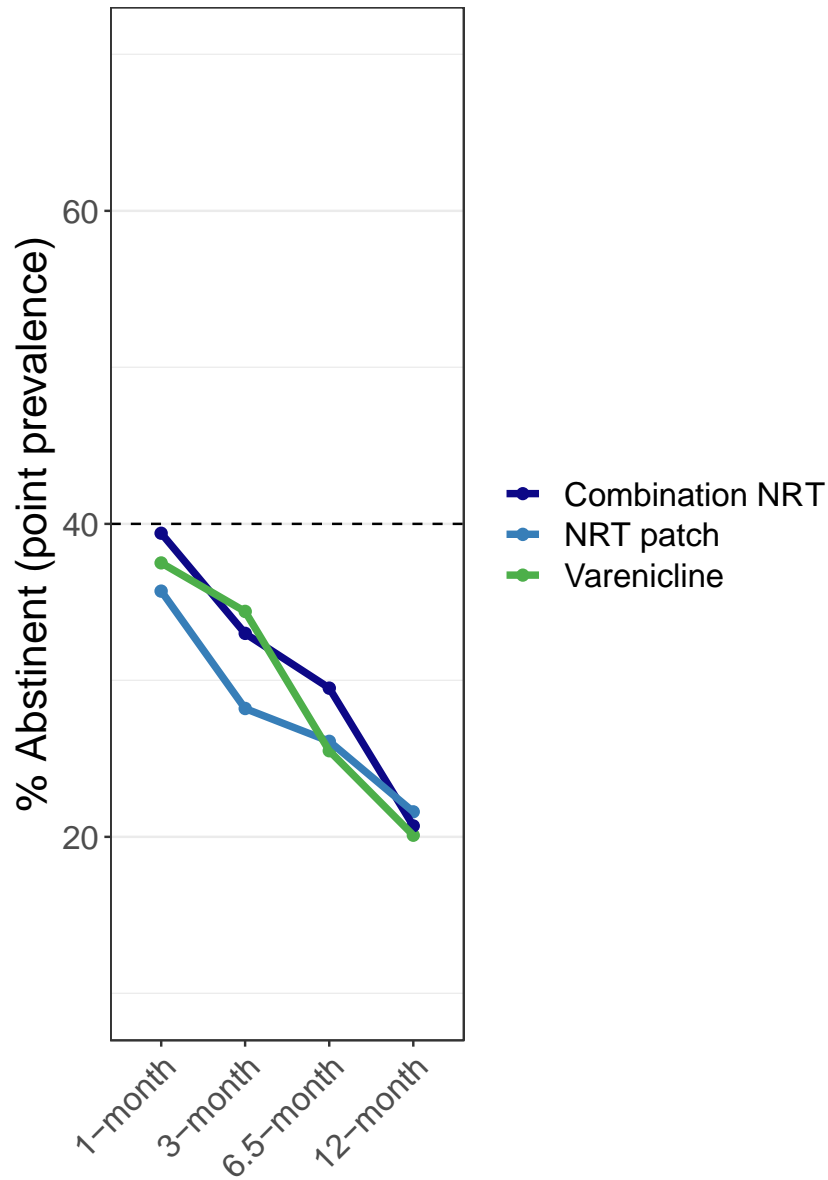
Fiore et al., 1994  
Meta-analysis:  
13 nicotine patch trials



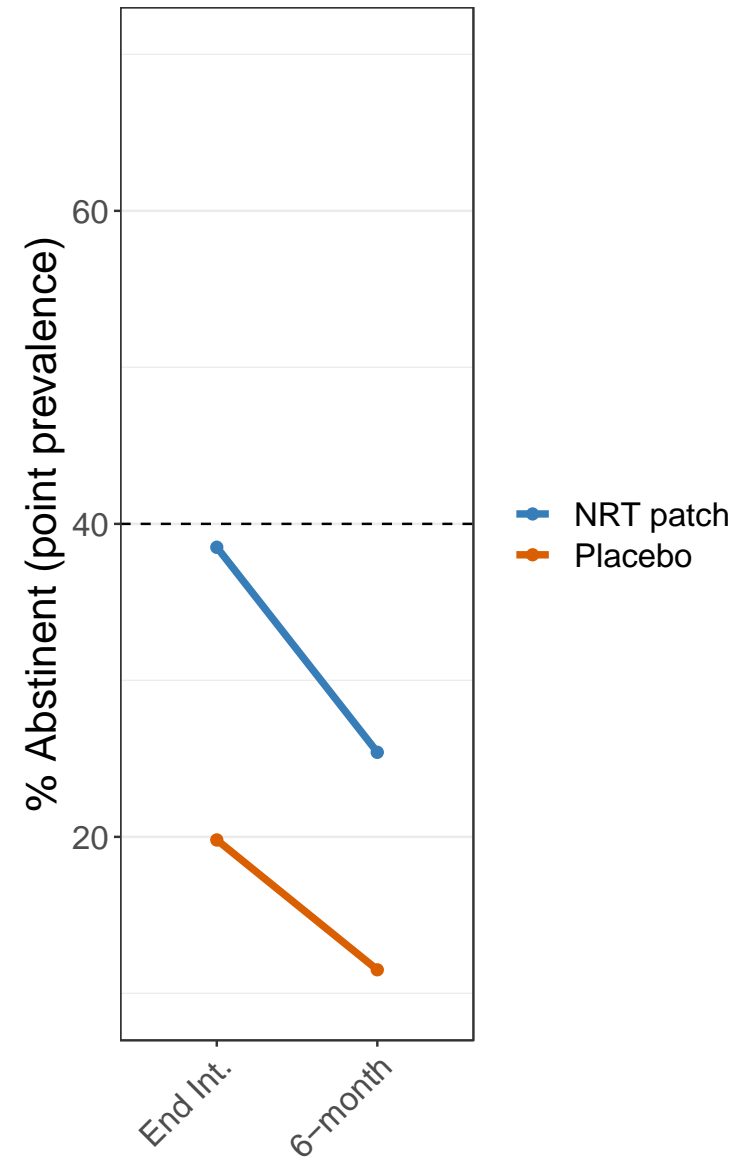
Paszek et al., 2017  
Meta-analysis:  
5 bupropion trials



Baker et al., 2016  
Varenicline vs. NRT



Fiore et al., 1994  
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13 nicotine patch trials



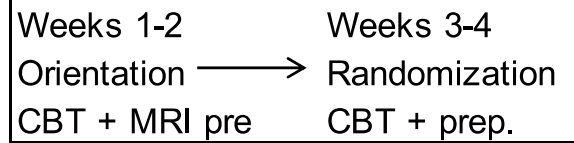
# Ongoing open-label comparative effectiveness trial – tobacco smoking

Active Treatment (weeks 1-13)



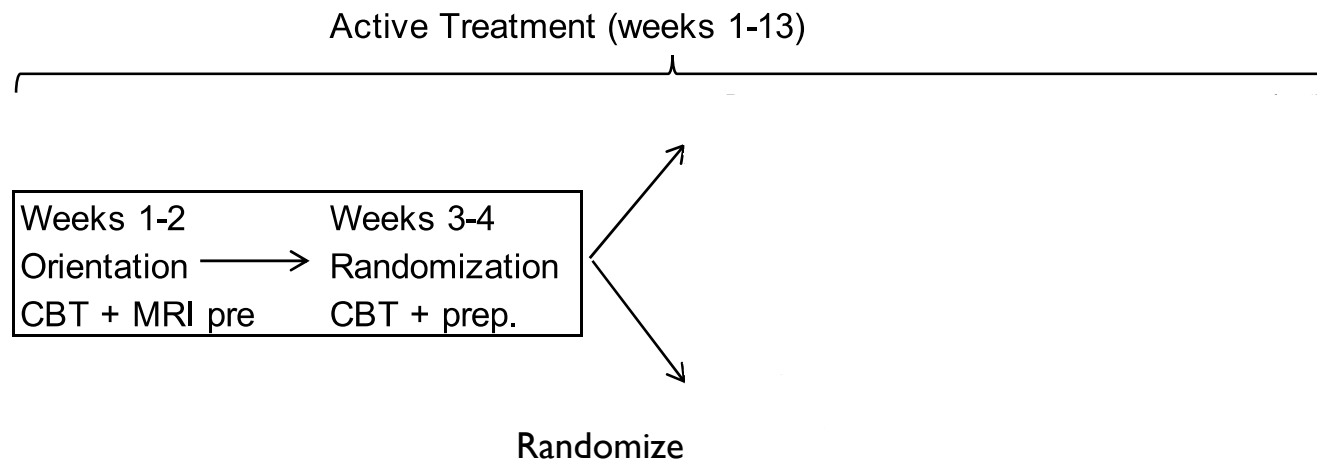
# Ongoing open-label comparative effectiveness trial – tobacco smoking

Active Treatment (weeks 1-13)

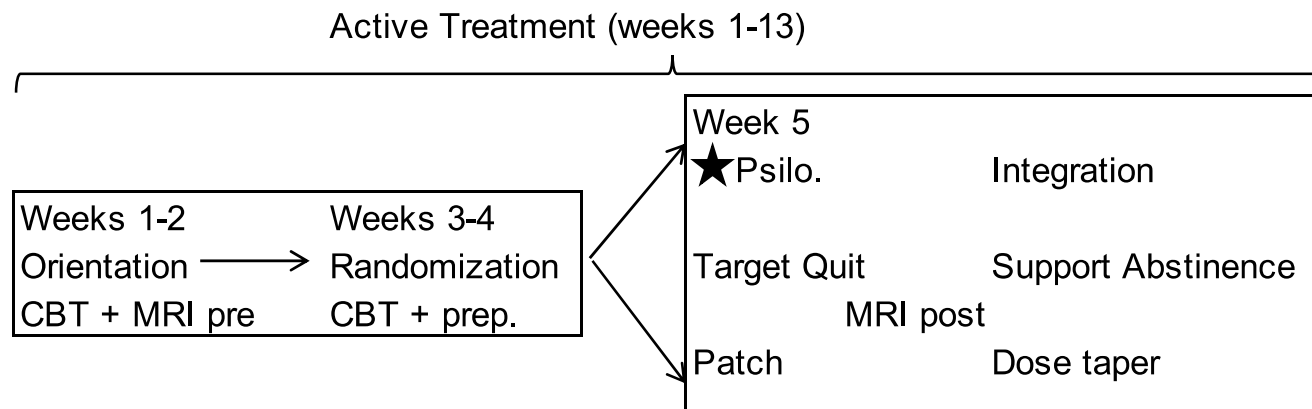


4 weeks CBT

# Ongoing open-label comparative effectiveness trial – tobacco smoking

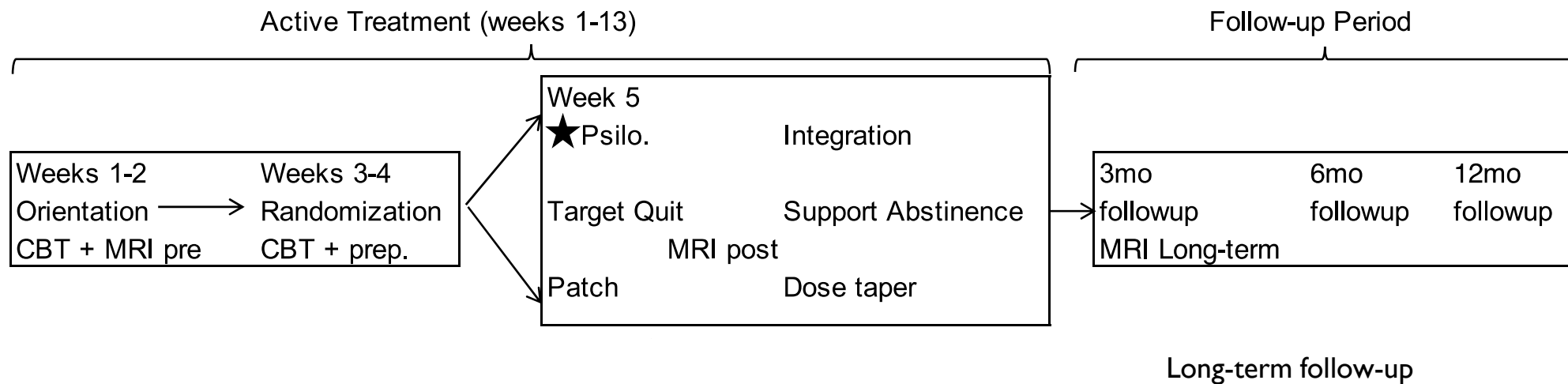


# Ongoing open-label comparative effectiveness trial – tobacco smoking



Psilocybin vs Nicotine patch

# Ongoing open-label comparative effectiveness trial – tobacco smoking

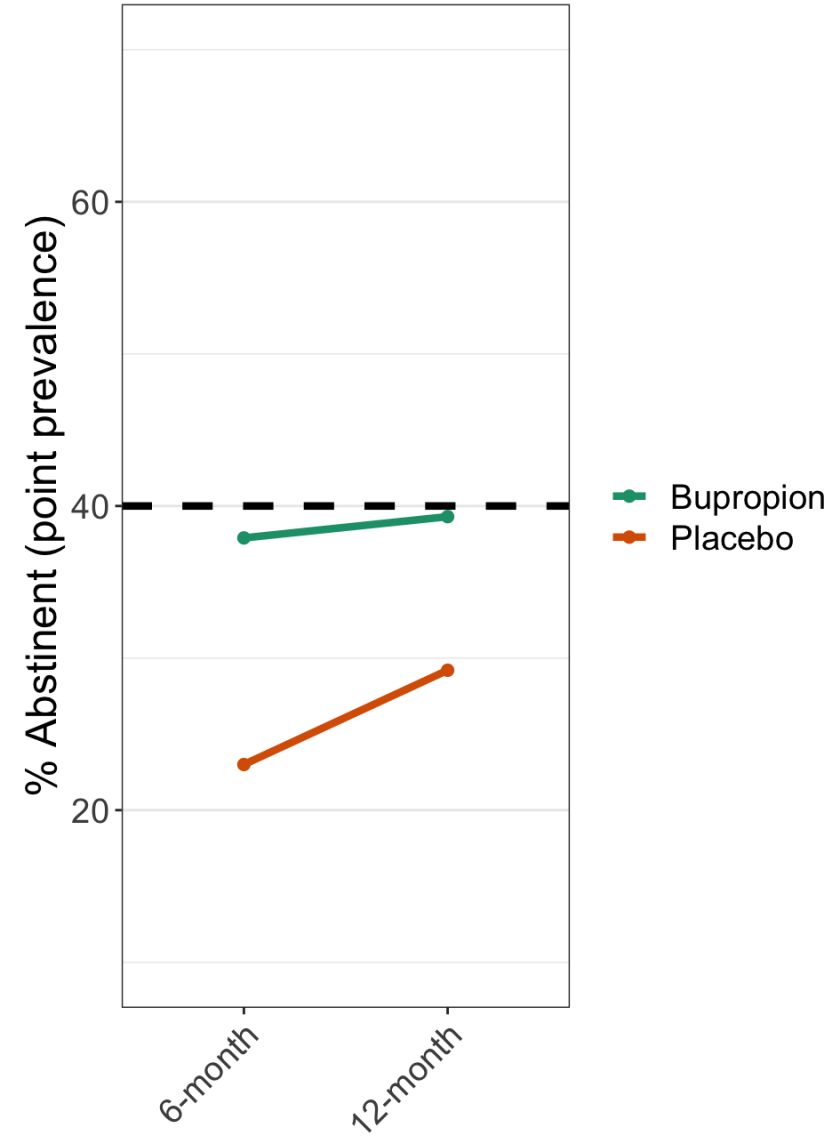




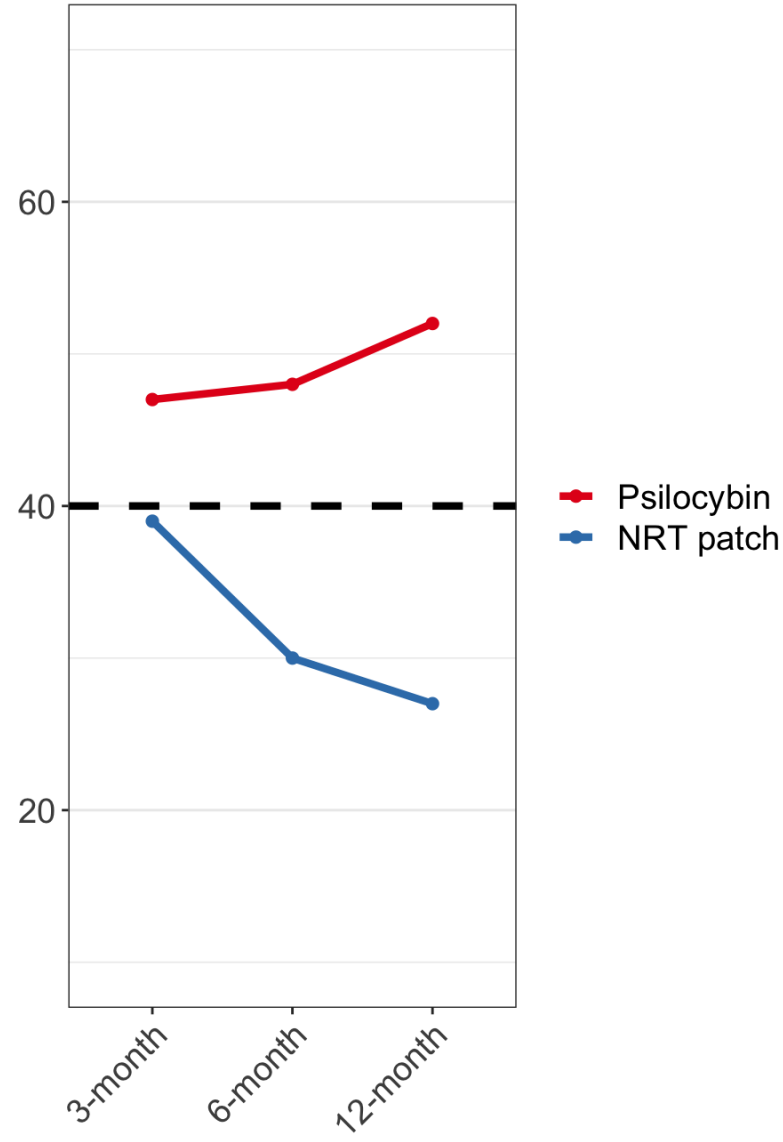
	Categories	Psilocybin	NRT	Total sample
		n=27	n=29	n=56
Sex , n (%)	Female	10 (37%)	9 (31%)	19 (34%)
	Male	17 (63%)	20 (69%)	37 (66%)
Age (years)	Mean (SD); Range	45 (11); 27 – 70	46 (12); 26 – 65	46 (11); 26 – 70
Race / Ethnicity n (%) <sup>a</sup>	White	24 (89%)	25 (86%)	49 (88%)
	Black / African American	3 (11%)	0 (0%)	3 (5%)
	Hispanic / Latino	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)
	Asian / South Asian	0 (0%)	2 (7%)	2 (4%)
	Biracial	0 (0%)	2 (7%)	2 (4%)
Education, n (%)	High School / G.E.D.	1 (4%)	2 (7%)	3 (5%)
	Some College / Trade School	10 (37%)	7 (24%)	17 (30%)
	Bachelor's Degree	10 (37%)	6 (21%)	16 (29%)
	Graduate Degree	6 (22%)	14 (48%)	20 (36%)
Prior Hallucinogen Use (%)	No	8 (30%)	6 (21%)	14 (25%)
	Yes	19 (70%)	23 (79%)	42 (75%)
Cigarettes per Day	Mean (SD); Range	17 (6); 5 - 30	16 (8); 5 - 40	17 (7); 5 - 40
Years Smoking	Mean (SD); Range	25 (9); 8 - 52	26 (13); 4 - 48	26 (11); 4 - 52
Previous quit attempts	Mean (SD); Range	8 (6); 3 - 25	6 (4); 2 - 20	7 (5); 2 - 25

- About 1 pack a day
- Mean duration 26 years
- Mean 7 quit attempts

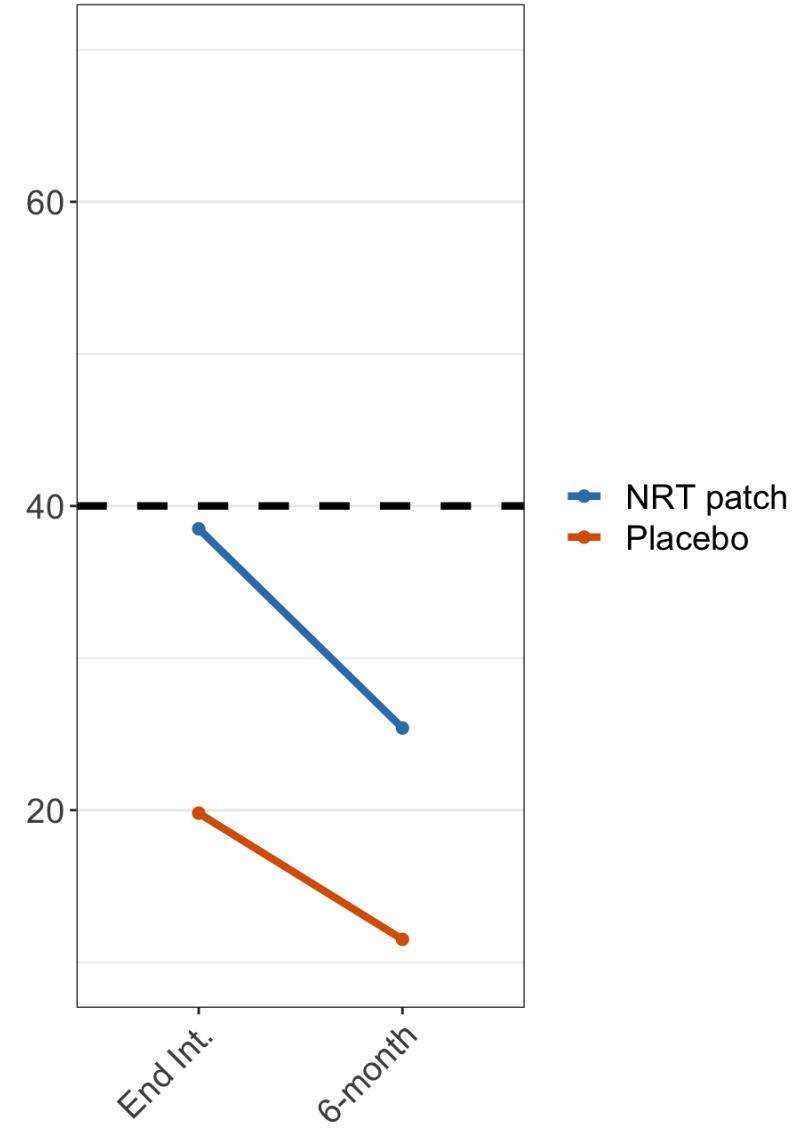
Paszek et al., 2017  
Meta-analysis:  
5 bupropion trials



Hopkins, ongoing



Fiore et al., 1994  
Meta-analysis:  
13 nicotine patch trials



# Older psychedelic studies for palliative

- (Kast 1962, 1964, 1966, 1967; Cohen 1965; Pahnke 1969; Fisher 1970; Grof et al. 1973; Richards et al. 1977)

# RCT of psychedelic for palliative / cancer

- Grob et al. (2011)
- Gasser et al. (2014)
- Griffiths et al. (2016)
- Ross et al. (2016)

# Grob (2011)

- N = 12, within-subject cross-over
- Advanced stage terminal cancer (6mo – 1 year) PLUS
- DSM-IV acute stress do, GAD, adjustment disorder with anxiety
- Psil 14mg / 70kg
- Safe but no significant diff in anxiety at f/u

# Gasser (2014)

- N = 12
- Advanced stage life threatening illness (survival > 6mo) PLUS
- DSM-IV anxiety disorder OR score  $\geq 40$  on STAI
- LSD 200mcg vs 20mcg
- Safe, significant decreases in anxiety to 2mo f/u with a large effect size of 1.1.

# Griffiths (2016)

- N = 51
- Life-threatening cancer dx
  - Active with poor prognosis (stage III or IV)
  - Recurrence or possibility of recurrence PLUS
- DSM-IV GAD, acute stress do, PTSD, mild/moderate MDD, dysthymic disorder, adjustment disorder
- PSI 22-30mg/70kg VS 1-3mg/70kg
- Improvements in wellbeing, anxiety, and depression, persisted for 6 months in majority (80%)

# Ross (2016)

- N = 29
- Life-threatening cancer dx PLUS
  - Initially terminally ill stage IV but broadened to include remission
- DSM-IV GAD, acute stress do, adjustment disorder
- PSI 21mg/70kg VS niacin
- reduced anxiety, depression, and cancer-related demoralization



## 2. Psychedelic therapy delivery

- a. Prep
- b. Dose
- c. Integration

# Prep and Drug Sessions

- Prep sessions
- Drug session:
  - The 7-hr drug sessions are conducted in a living-room-like environment
  - Two monitors are present throughout the session



# Follow-up (integration)

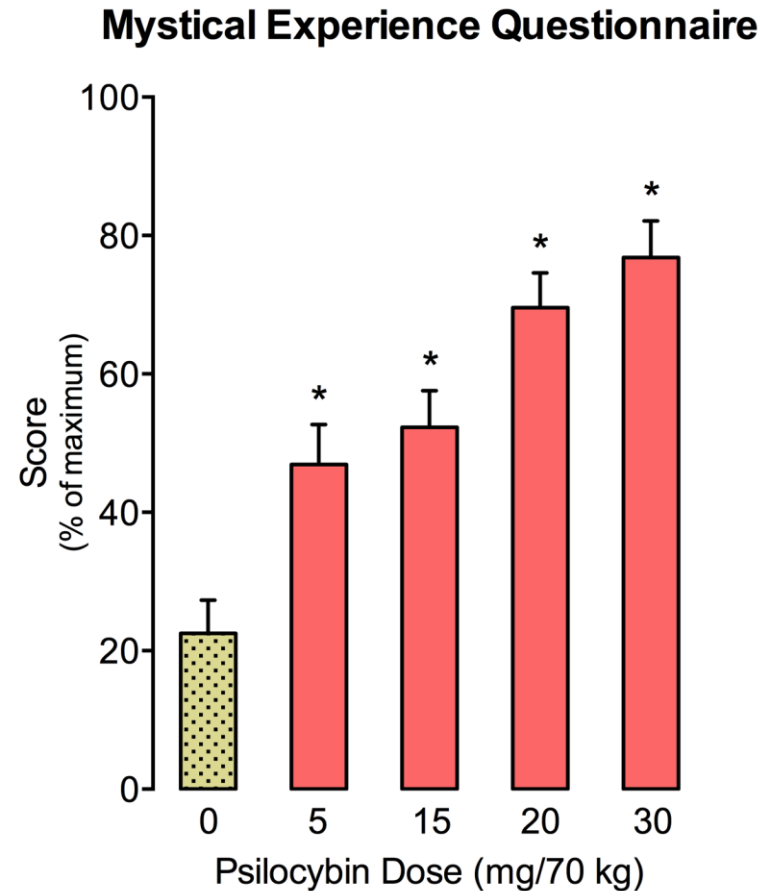
- Meetings with both facilitators in days and weeks following dosing sessions
- Review of experiences on session day and interim events
  - Goal is to help the participant understand and incorporate insights from the experience into their daily lives

### 3. Psychedelic therapy as psychotherapy

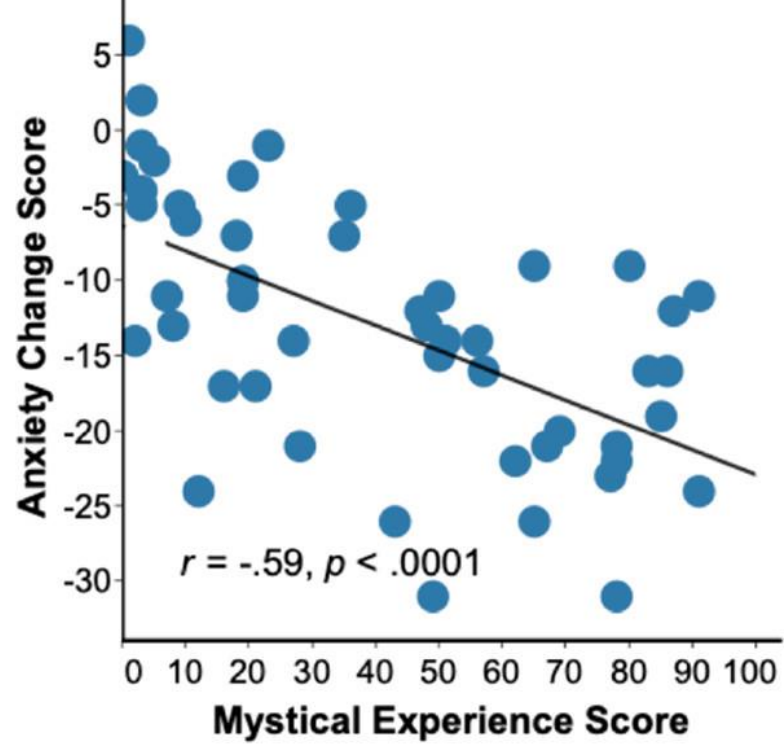
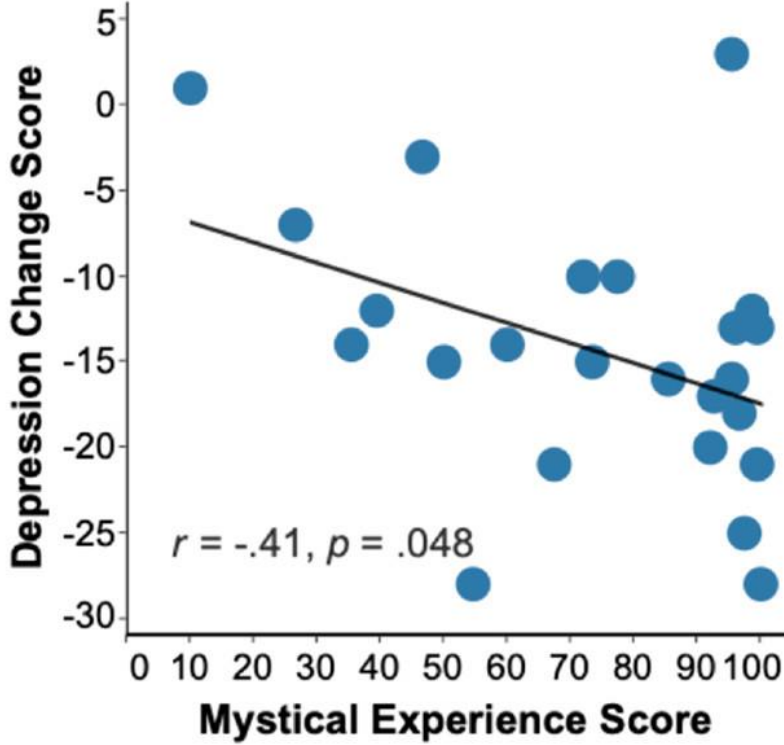
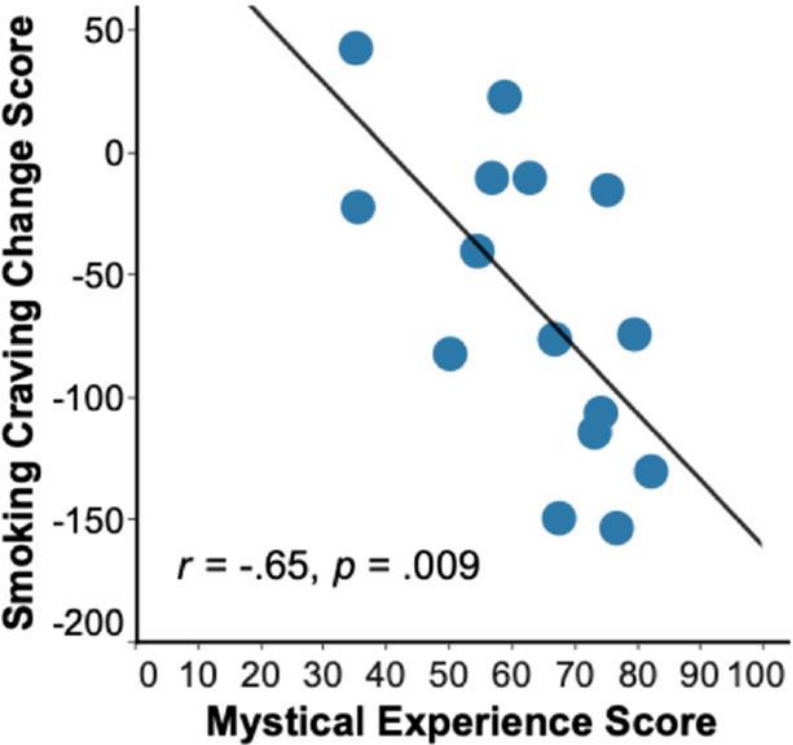
- a. Subjective effects
- b. Common factors of psychotherapy
- c. Cases

# Psychological mechanisms of action

- Mystical experience Questionnaire
  - Unity, deeply felt positive mood, transcendence of space/time, ineffability, sense of reverence
  - Dose-dependent



### Mystical Experience on Session Days Predicts Later Therapeutic Outcomes



# Mystical?

- MEQ ~ Near Death Experience
  - $r = 0.8$
- MEQ ~ Awe Experience Scale
  - $r = 0.8$
- MEQ ~ Oceanic boundlessness
  - $r = 0.9$



# The Subjective Effects of Psychedelics Are Necessary for Their Enduring Therapeutic Effects

David B. Yaden and Roland R. Griffiths\*

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VS

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# The Subjective Effects of Psychedelics Are Necessary for Their Enduring Therapeutic Effects

David B. Yaden and Roland R. Griffiths\*

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VS

No, they're not

# **The Subjective Effects of Psychedelics Are Necessary for Their Enduring Therapeutic Effects**

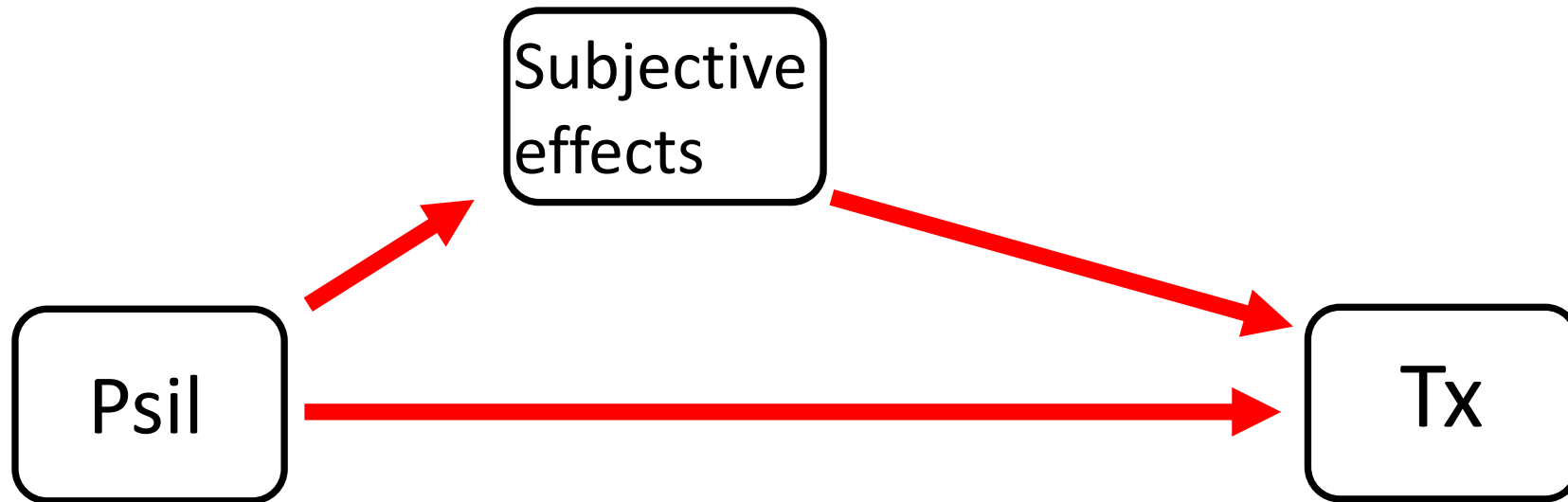
David B. Yaden and Roland R. Griffiths\*

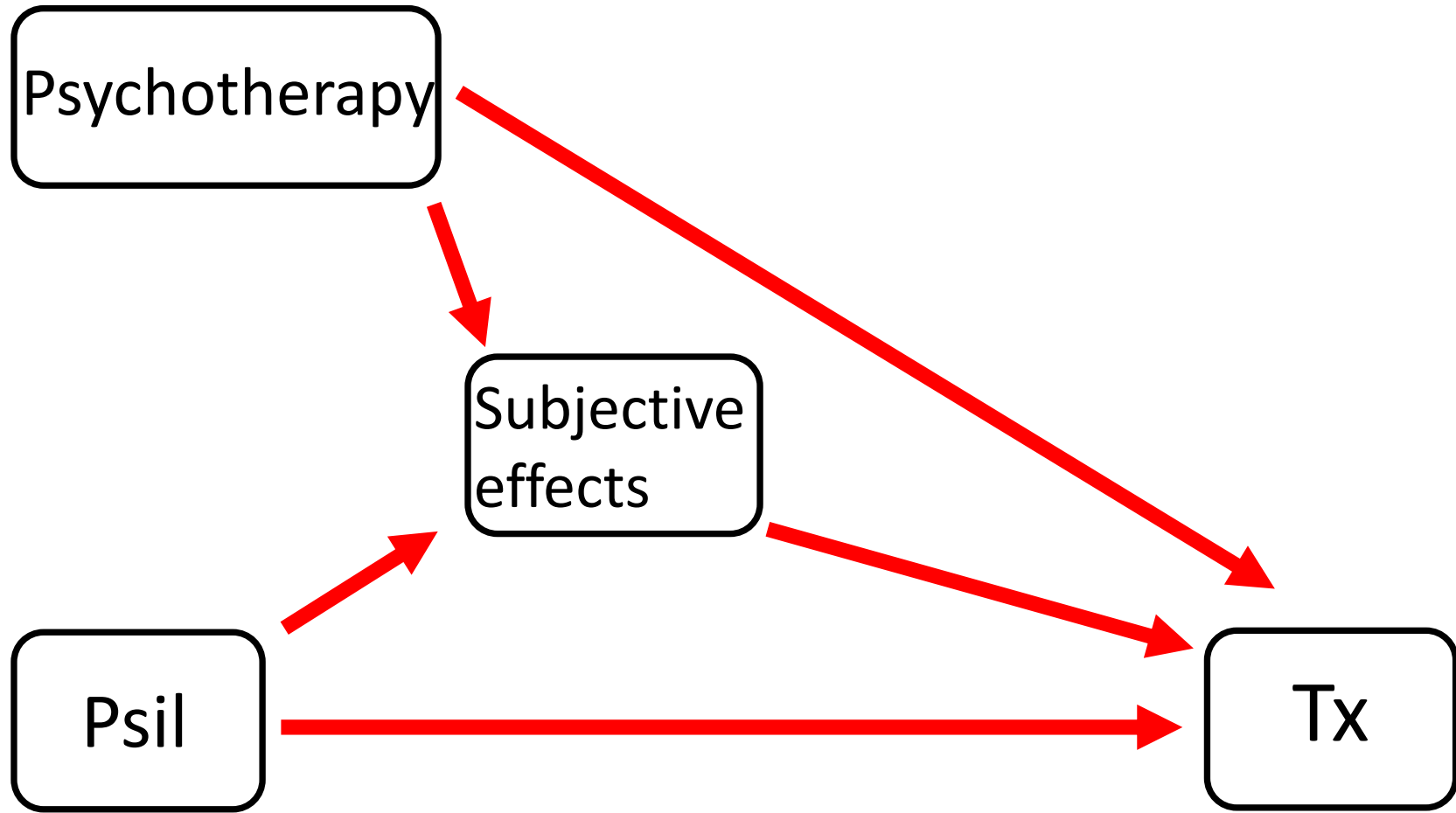
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VS

# **The Subjective Effects of Psychedelics May Not Be Necessary for Their Enduring Therapeutic Effects**

David E. Olson\*





# Common factors of psychotherapy



# Dodo bird verdict

- “Everyone has won and all must have prizes”
- Introduced by Saul Rosenzweig in 1936
- Became the subject of empirical research by the 1970’s

# Dodo bird verdict

- Luborsky et al. (2002)
  - Examined 17 meta-analyses of trials comparing 2 active psychotherapies
  - Statistically insignificant differences, on average  $d = 0.2$
  - Also found that much of the specific effect of a therapy could be explained by researcher allegiance
- Dismantling studies find minimal effects of supposed active ingredient



# Jerome Frank

- *Persuasion and Healing*
- Viewed psychotherapy as a salve for demoralization via repairing one's "assumptive world" (the set of enduring cognitive, affective and behavioral assumptions that guide perception and action)
- Pts "seek help not in response to the symptoms themselves but because their efforts to cope with the symptoms have failed"
- Psychotherapy exerts its impact on "the pathogenic meanings patients attribute to feelings and events in their lives"

# Jerome Frank

- Common factors of psychotherapy (Frank, 1993):
  - emotionally charged, confiding relationship with an expert
  - healing setting
  - rationale, conceptual scheme, or myth
  - Therapeutic ritual
- Should allow:
  - Corrective emotional experiences
  - Skillbuilding
  - Rescripting 'pathogenic meaning'

- Per Frank, the overall method of psychotherapeutic change is the rescripting of “pathogenic meanings”
- A successful psychotherapy must:
  - provide a plausible explanation of the patient’s problem that is consistent with emotional well-being and suggest a means to improve.
  - be emotionally arousing
    - The more intense “the experiential, as opposed to the purely cognitive, components of learning, the more likely they are to produce changes in the patients’ attitudes or behavior”

“It is curious how under LSD the fondest theories of the therapist are confirmed by his patient. Freudian symbols come out of the mouths of patients with Freudian analysts. Those who have Jungian therapists deal with the collective unconscious and with archetypal images. The patient senses the frame of reference to be employed, and his associations and dreams are molded to it.

Therefore, the validity of any school of healing should not be based upon productions of the patient—especially LSD patients,” (Cohen 1967, 578).

“I relived my own conception and various stages of my embryological development. While I was experiencing all the complexities of the embryogenesis, with details that surpassed the best medical handbooks, I was flashing back to an even more remote past, visualizing some phylogenetic vestiges from the life of my animal ancestors.

The scientist in me was struck by another riddle: can the genetic code, under certain circumstances, be translated into a conscious experience?... I felt, however, that something of utmost relevance had happened to me on this session day and that I would never be the same. I reached a new feeling of harmony and self-acceptance, and a global understanding of existence that is difficult to define (Grof 1975)”.

# Mechanisms

- Psychotherapy
  - Psychological insight<sup>1</sup>
  - Increased mindfulness/acceptance<sup>2-4</sup>
  - Self-mastery/emotional skills
  - Interpersonally intimate, trusting environment
  - Suggestibility<sup>5-6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Davis et al. (2021). *J. Psychopharmacol*, 35(4), 437-446.

<sup>2</sup> Madsen et al. (2020). *Eur Neuropsychopharm* 2020; 5

<sup>3</sup> Soler et al. (2016) *Psychopharmacology (Berl)* 2016; 233: 823–829

<sup>4</sup> Wolff et al. (2020). *Front Psychiatry* 2020; 11: 5

<sup>5</sup> Carhart-Harris et al. (2015). *Psychopharm*, 232(4), 785-794

<sup>6</sup> Mitchell et al. (2017). *Psychopharm*, 232(4), 785-794

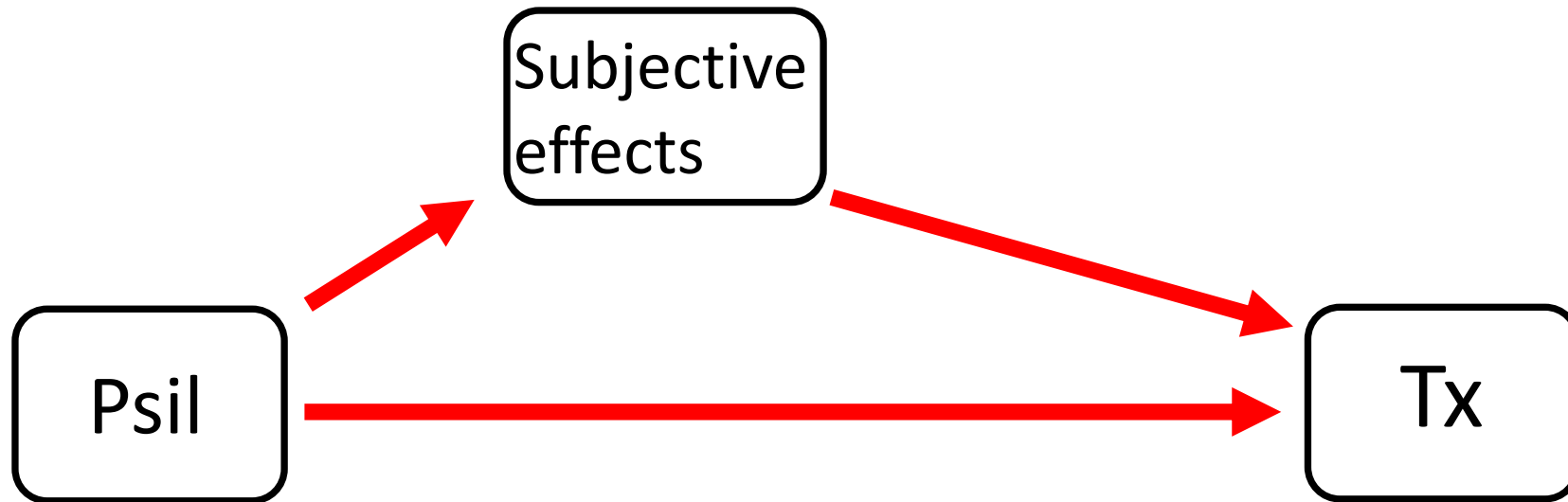
# Cases

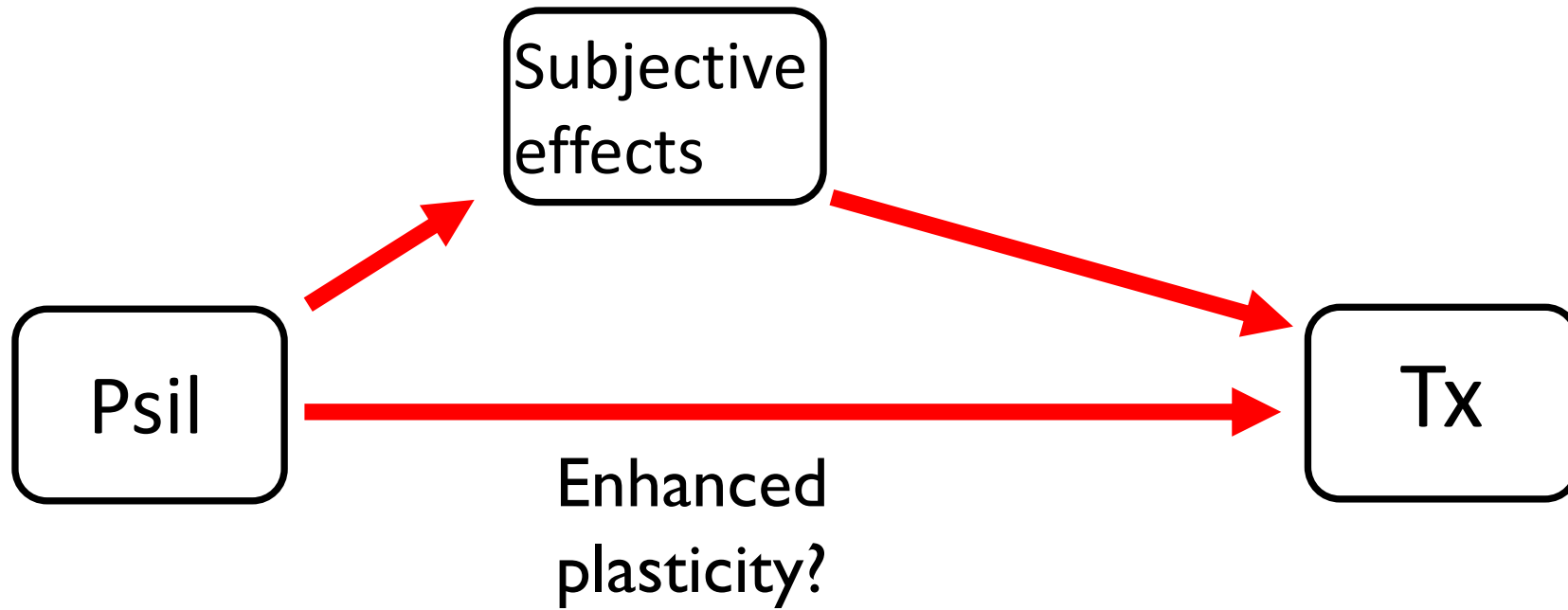
# Cases

*I was really hoping the experience would "cure" my depression. It has not. However, it has really changed my perspective about my own emotional state. I am much less stuck with the idea that my feelings are permanent, and I am embracing the idea that my emotional state is one of constant change.*

*It has allowed me to become more of a dispassionate observer of my emotions and has made me more curious about what my emotions are trying to tell me. For a long time, I was stuck on the what, now I am much more interested in the why.*







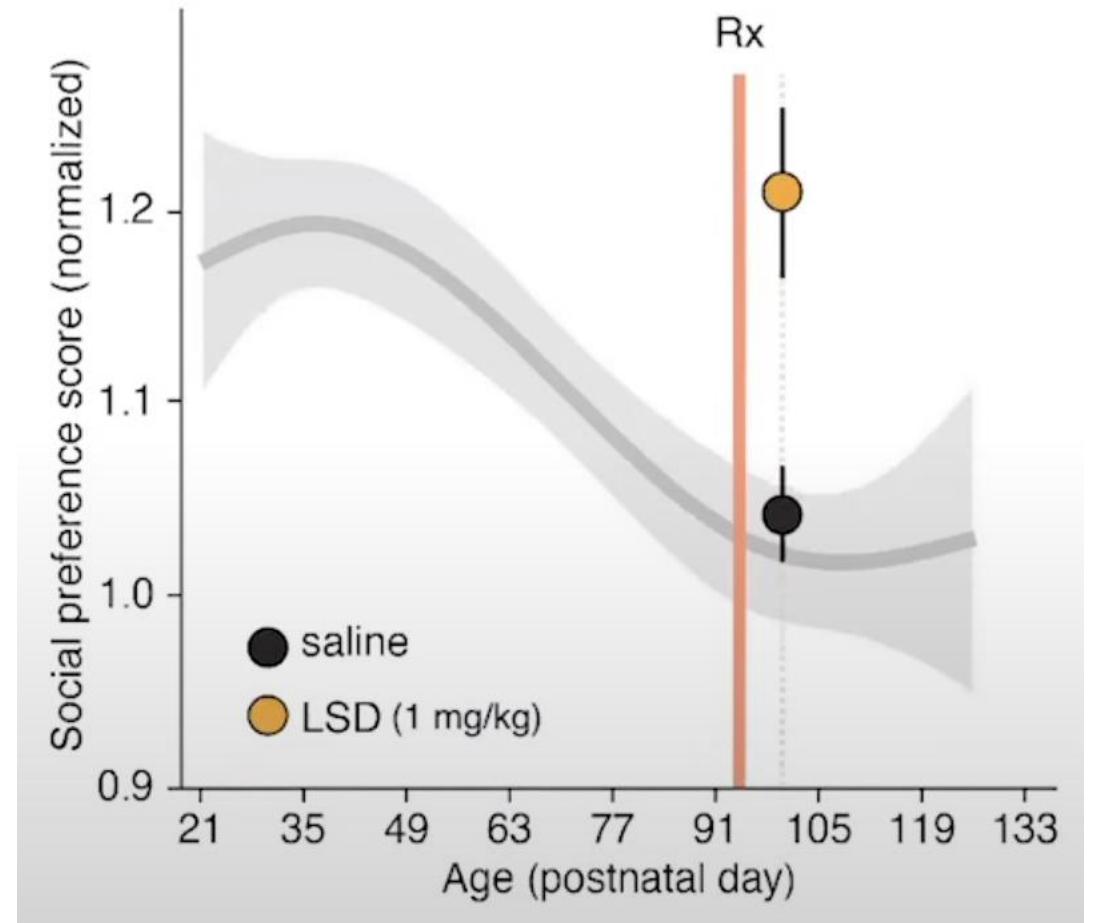
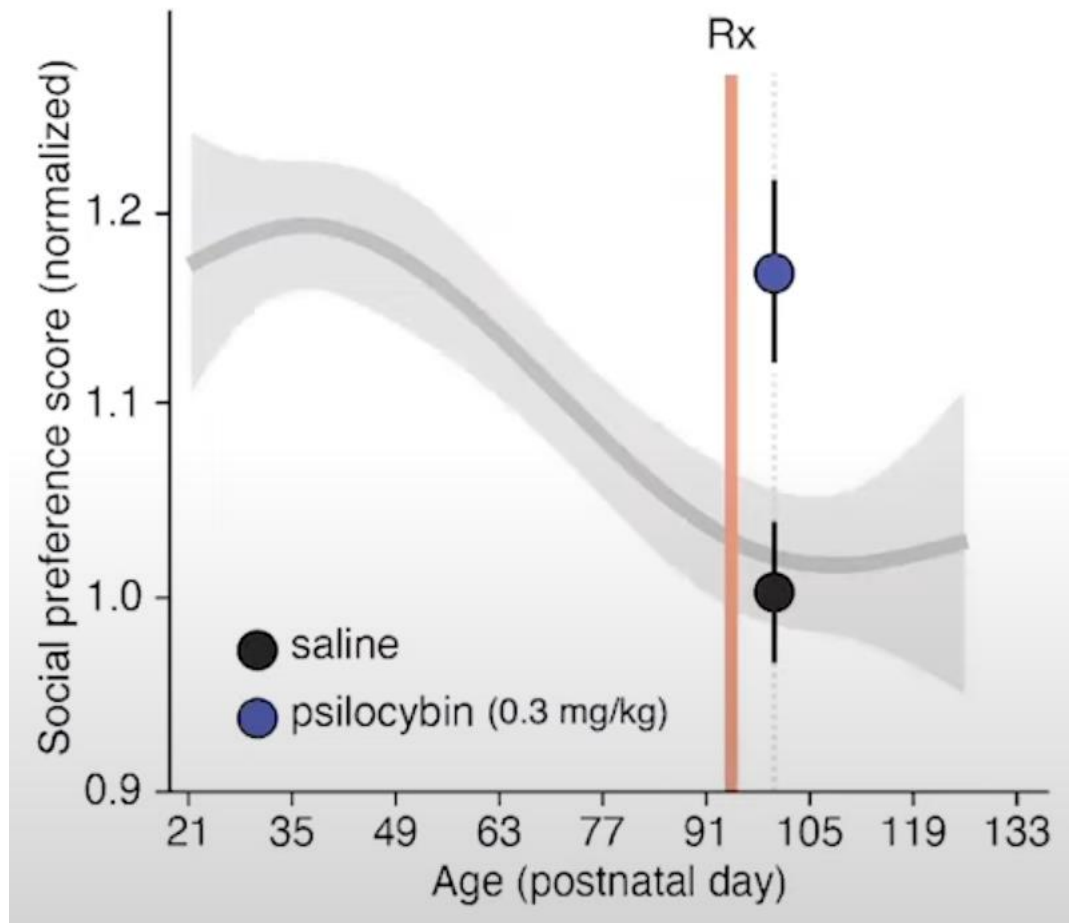
# Enhanced structural and functional plasticity

- Psilocybin induces rapid and persistent growth in dendritic spines and synapse formation in vitro<sup>1</sup> and in vivo<sup>2</sup> in rodents

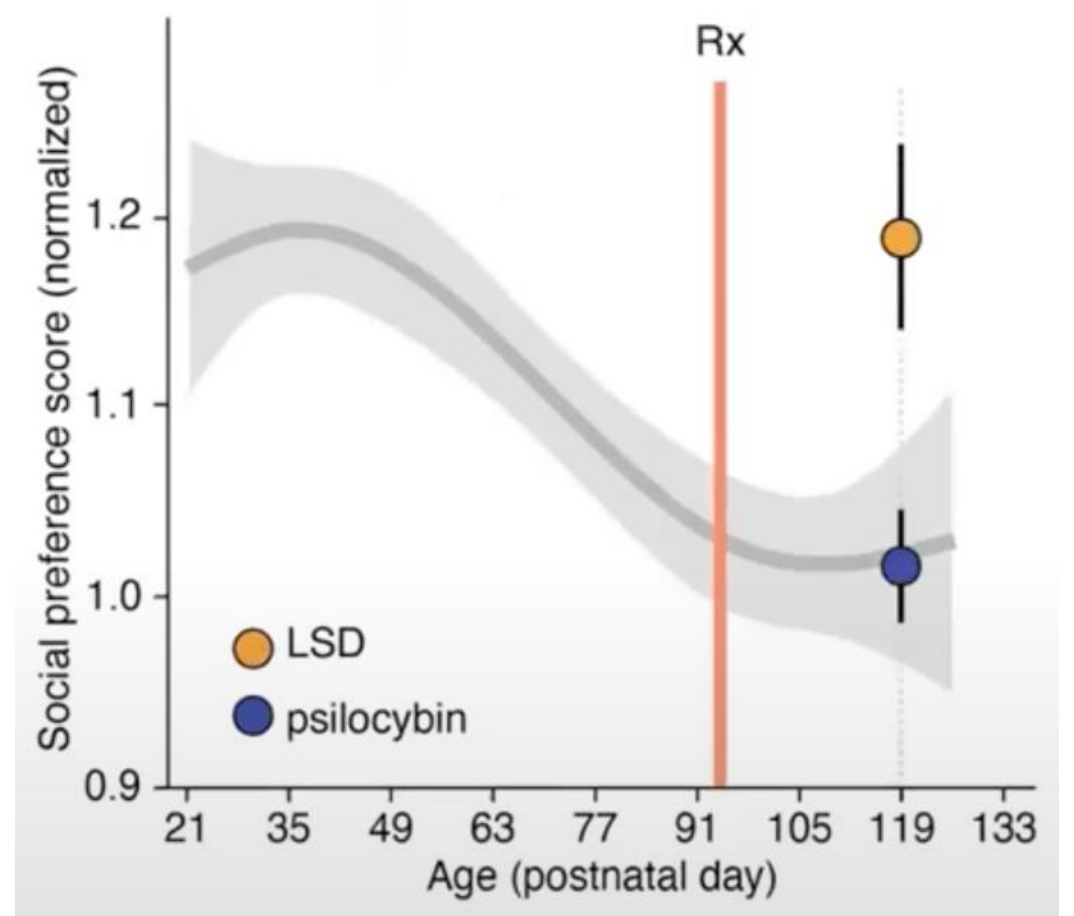
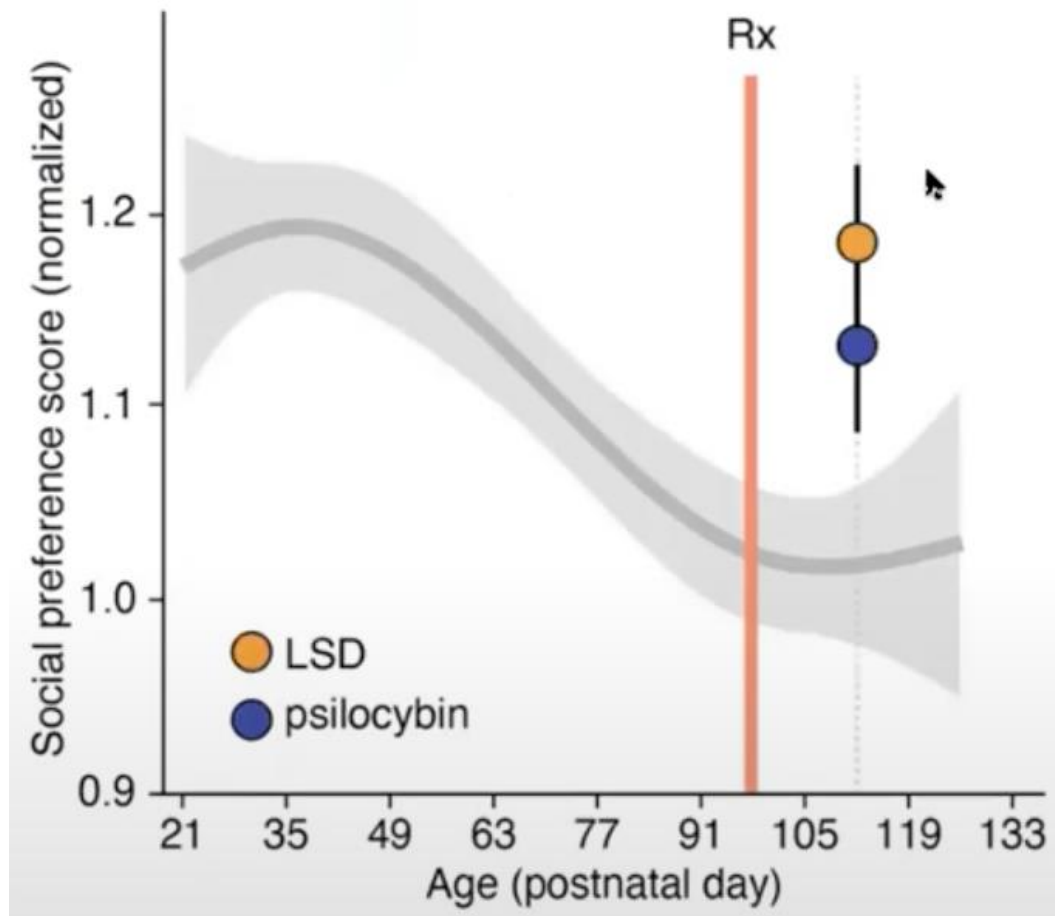
<sup>1</sup>Ly, C., et al. (2018). *Cell reports*, 23(11), 3170–3182.

<sup>2</sup>Shao L-X, et al. (2021) *Neuron* 109(16): 2535-2544.e4.

# Psil and LSD reopen Social Reward Learning Critical Period



# This effect lasts for weeks



## 4. Clinical issues and future directions

- a. Serotonergic antidepressants
- b. Bipolar disorder
- c. Future trials

# Serotonergic antidepressants

- Reduced psilocybin effects
- Serotonin syndrome

# Reduced LSD effect after chronic serotonergic antidepressants

- Pts taking MAOI nialamide for several weeks were insensitive to the effects of LSD (Grof & Dytrych, 1965).
  - This effect lasted at least 14 days before eventually resolving



# Reduced LSD effect after chronic serotonergic antidepressants

- Pts taking MAOI nialamide for several weeks were insensitive to the effects of LSD (Grof & Dytrych, 1965).
  - This effect lasted at least 14 days before eventually resolving
- Small survey studies of LSD users showed similar effects with SSRIs (Bonson et al., 1995) and MAOIs (Bonson et al., 1996).

# Becker et al., 2021

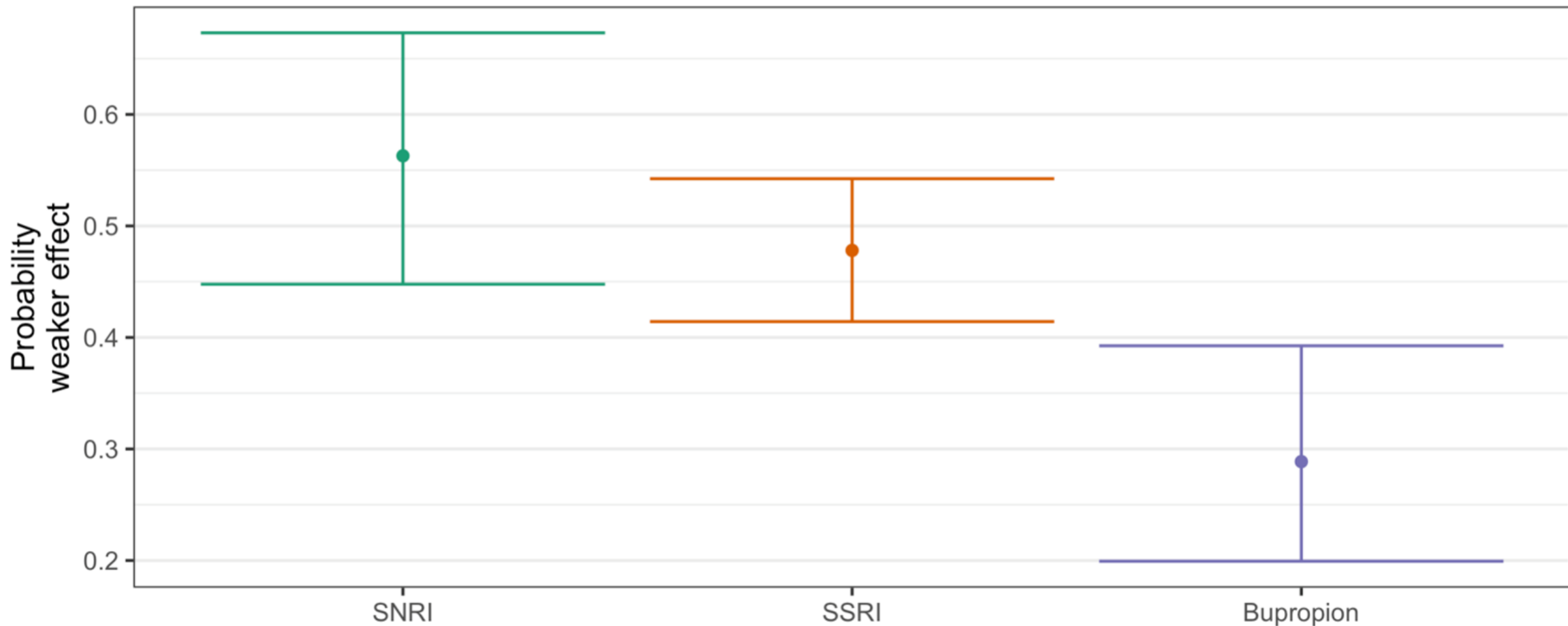
- Double-blind, pretreatment with escitalopram vs placebo, followed by psilocybin 25mg
  - Escitalopram 10mg x7 days -> 20mg x7 days

# Becker et al., 2021

- Minimal decrement in psilocybin effects
- No indication of adverse events

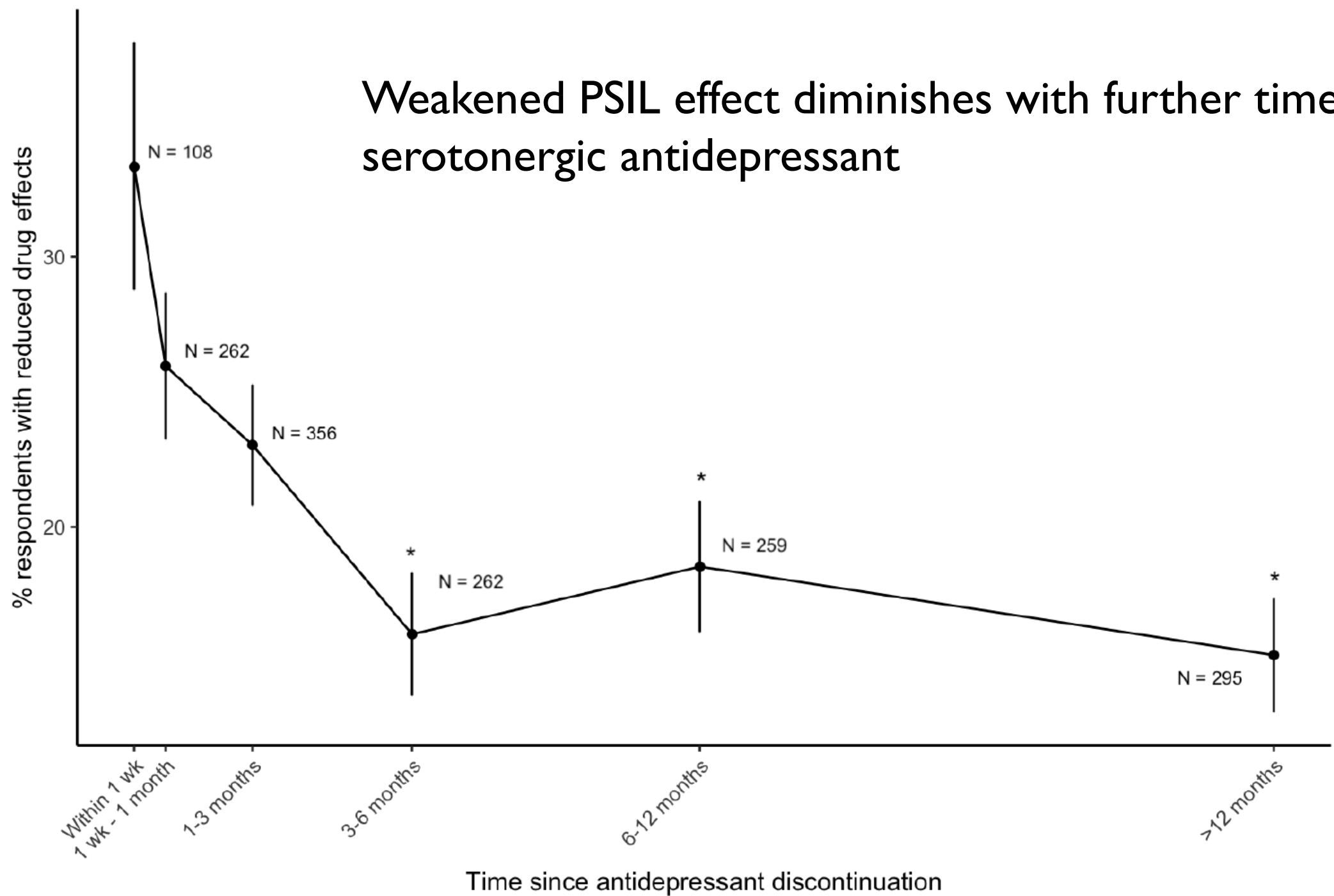
# Probability of weaker psilocybin effect with concurrent antidepressant

(n = 595)



Probability of weaker effect with 95% Confidence Intervals

# Weakened PSIL effect diminishes with further time off a serotonergic antidepressant



# Serotonergic antidepressants

- Chronic serotonergic antidepressants probably weaken psychedelic effects
- This effect persists for weeks to months
- Yet many people do not report weakened effects

# Serotonin syndrome

- Better called serotonin toxicity
- Vanishingly rare even in massive overdoses of LSD or psilocybin
- DMT is regularly administered with MAOIs without serotonin toxicity

# Bipolar disorder

- Generally excluded from psychedelic trials due to risk of provoking mania



# Bipolar disorder

- Pretty much every effective antidepressant can cause mania, mixed states or mood cycling
  - Antidepressants (Patel et al., 2015; Goldberg & Truman, 2003; Wehr et al., 1987)
  - Bright light therapy (Sit et al., 2007)
  - Acute sleep deprivation (Colombo et al., 1999; Wehr et al., 1982)
  - ECT (Lee et al., 2014)
  - Low dose atypical antipsychotics (Keating et al., 2005; Traber et al., 2007; Donohue, 2010)

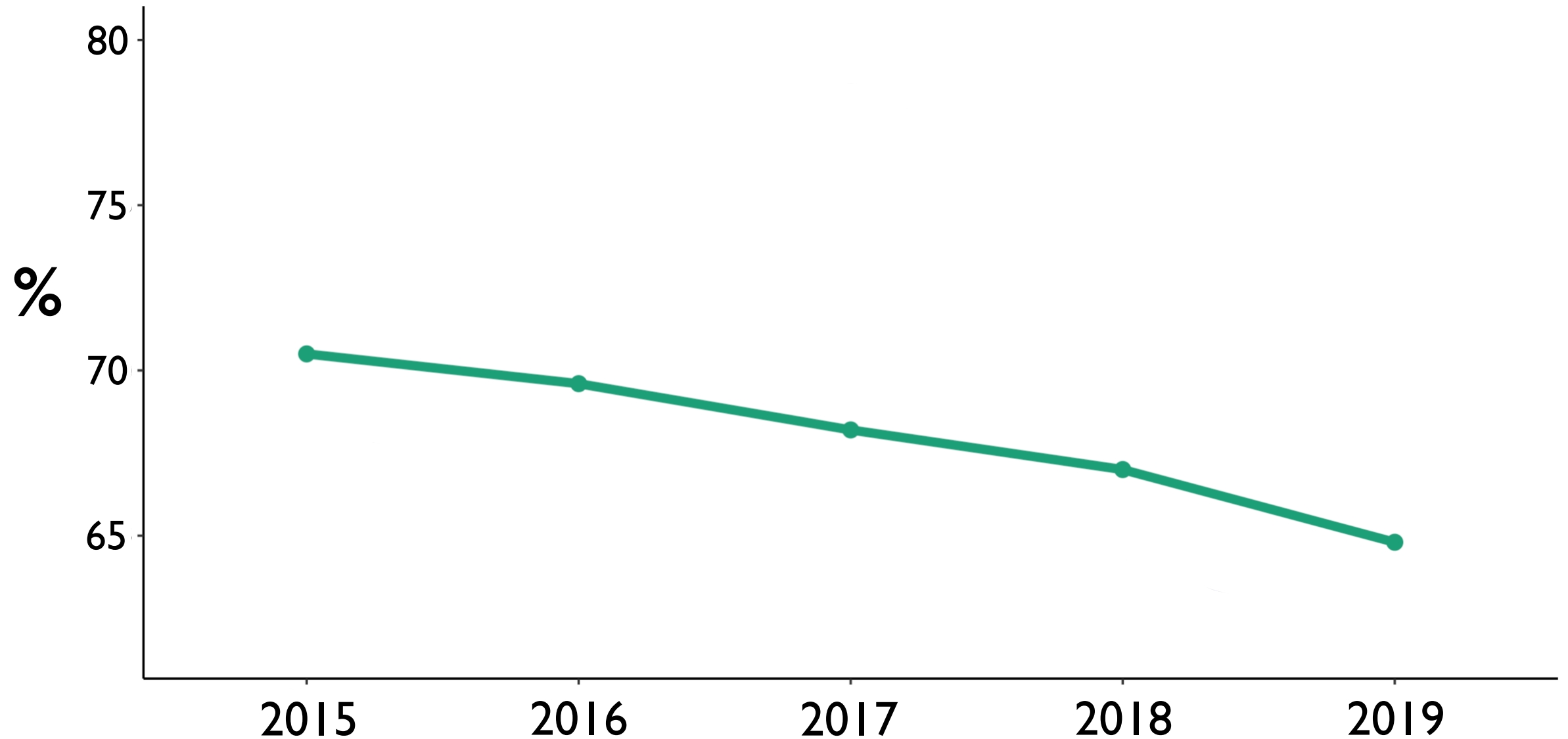
# Bipolar disorder

- Majority of illness is spent in depressed episode
- Bipolar depression is difficult to treat

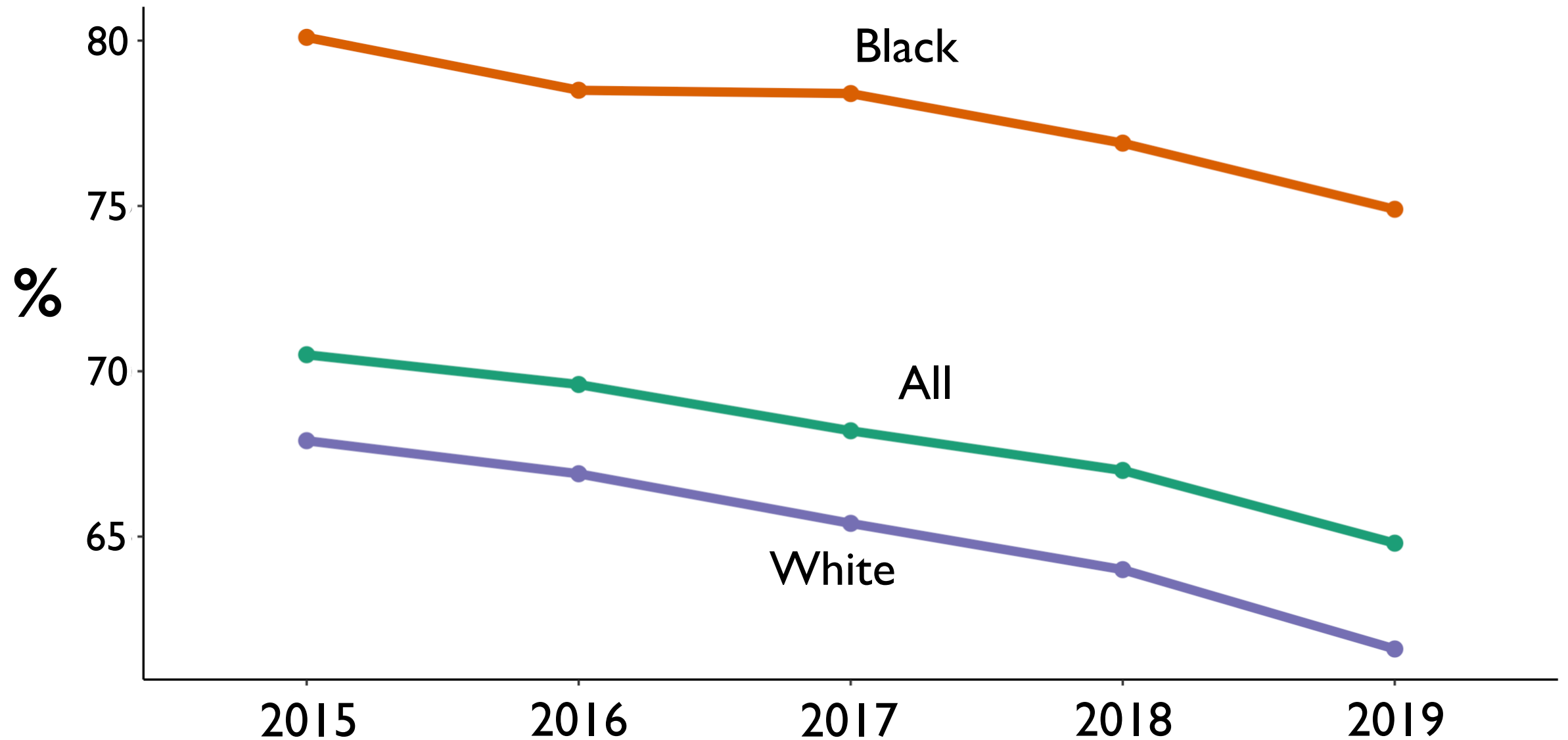
# Populations

<b>Ever used</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Native American</b>	<b>Black</b>
Psilocybin mushrooms	9%	12%	10%	1%
LSD	10%	13%	17%	2%

# Perception of Great Risk of trying LSD once or twice



# Perception of Great Risk of trying LSD once or twice

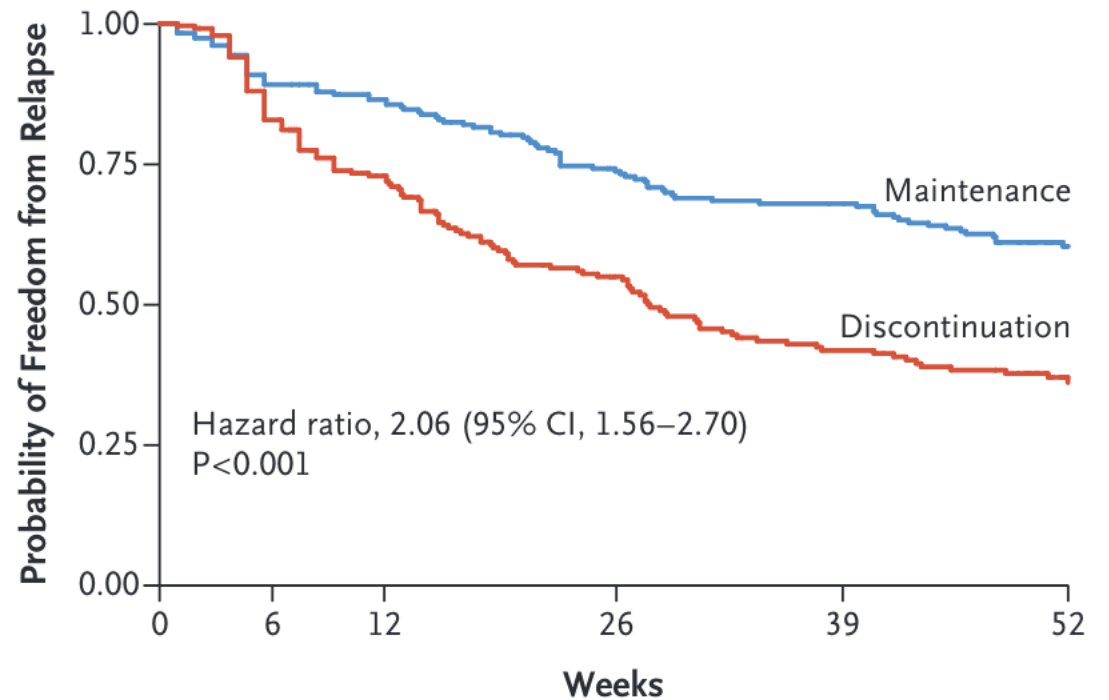


# Future studies

- Bipolar disorder
- Postpartum depression
- Depressed inpatients
- Comparative efficacy vs ECT
- Comorbidity studies
- Shorter acting psychedelics
- Minimal psychotherapy
- Group dosing
- Antidepressant discontinuation

# Antidepressant discontinuation

- ANTLER (Lewis et al., 2021): 478 pts:
  - maintained on antidepressant for  $\geq 2$  years
  - hx 2 depressive episodes
  - feel good enough to stop
- Randomized to continue or stop drug (placebo)



# Legal initiatives

- Decriminalization initiatives
- Legalization for supported use
- Religious use

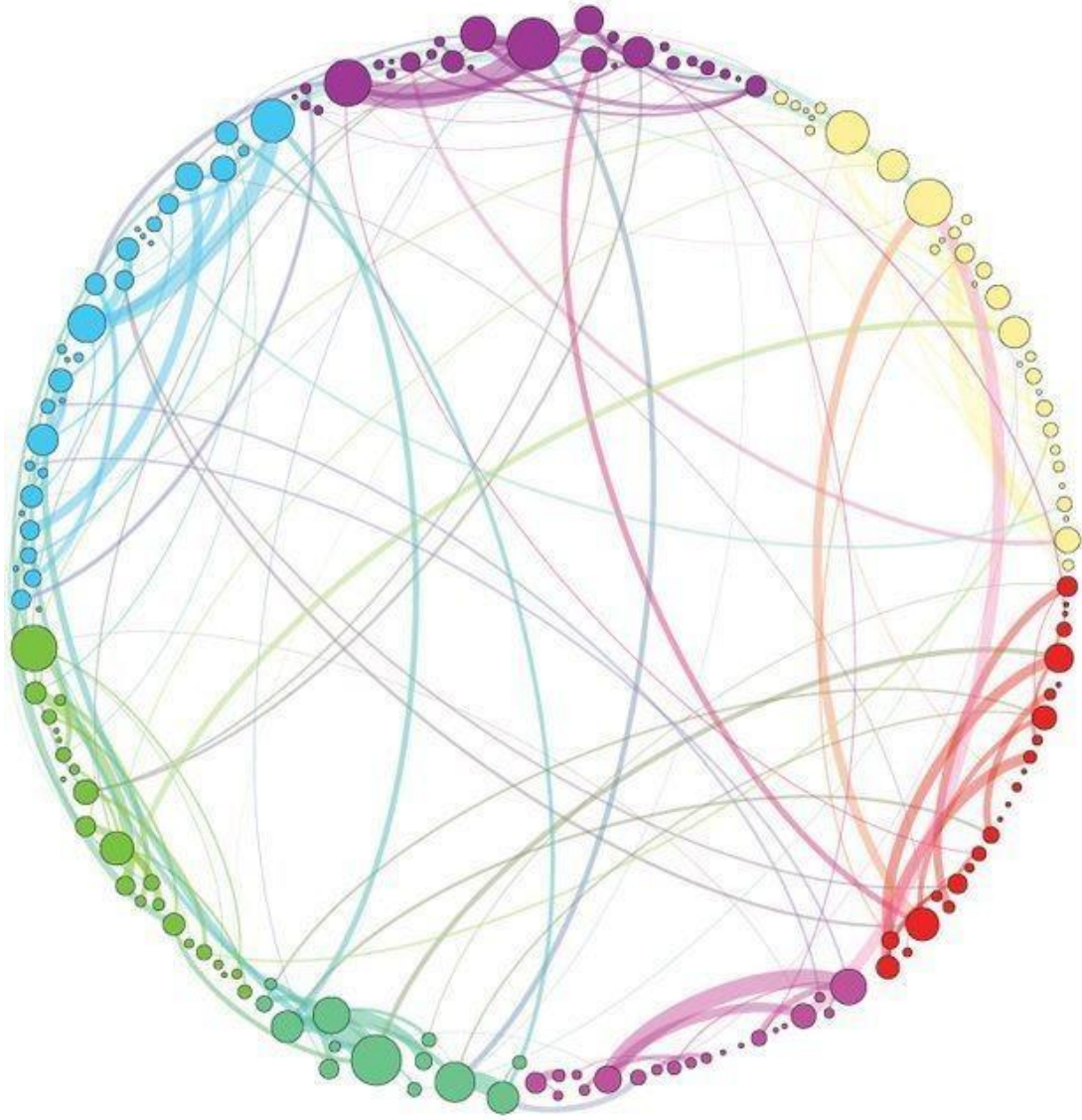


# Thank you!

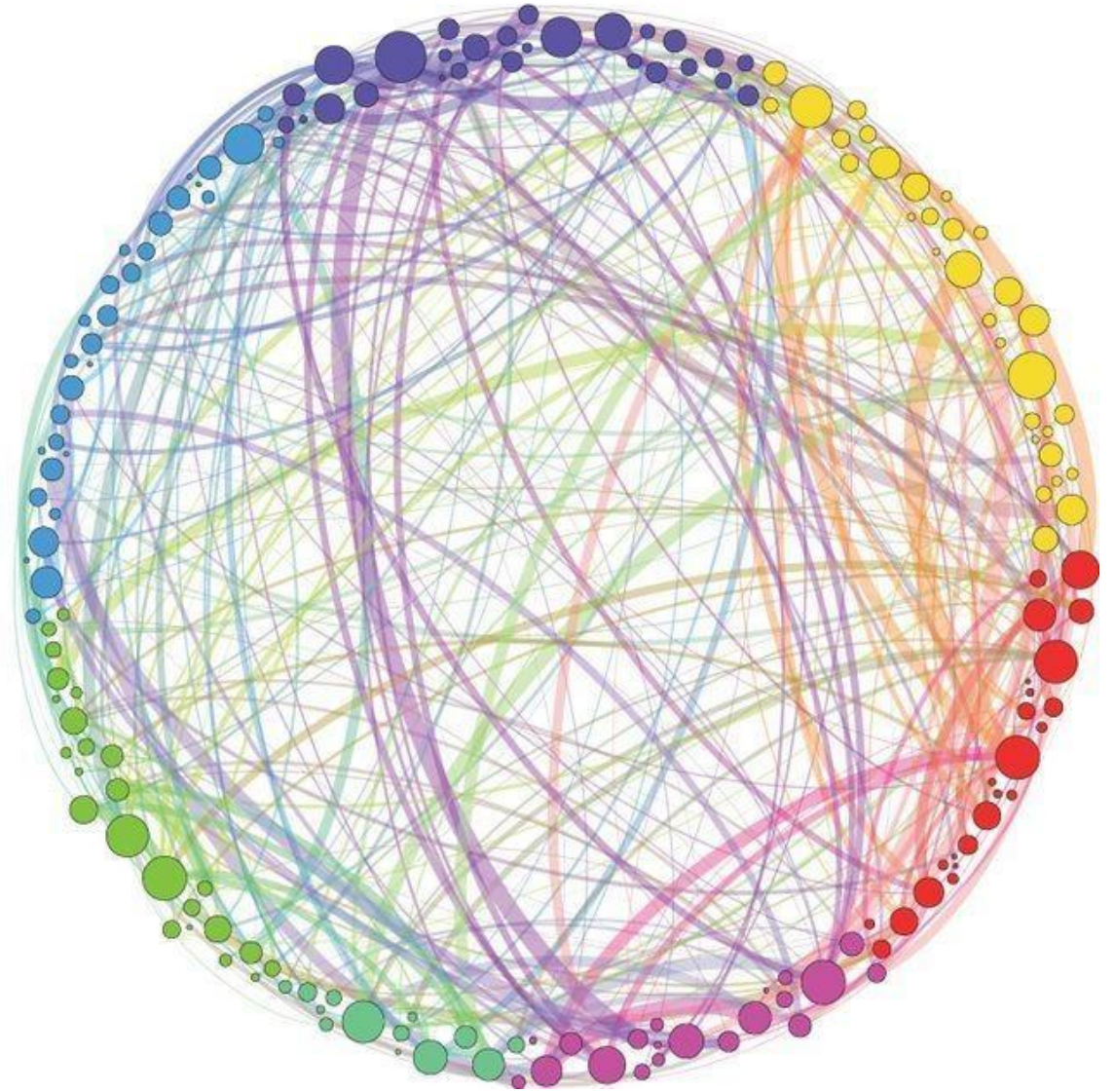
CPCR team members:

- Roland Griffiths, Ph.D.
- Fred Barrett, Ph.D.
- Albert Garcia-Romeu, Ph.D.
- Alan Davis, Ph.D.
- Mary Cosimano, M.S.W.
- William Richards, Ph.D.
- Natalie Gukasyan M.D.
- Manoj Doss, Ph.D.
- David Yaden, Ph.D.
- Ceyda Sayalı, Ph.D.
- Nate Sepeda
- Taylor Washington
- Sam Hilbert
- Sydney White
- Ian Geithner

Placebo



Psilocybin



# JUST SO STORIES

FOR LITTLE CHILDREN



RUDYARD KIPLING

The Default-Mode Network Example

# Why Interrupting the Default Mode Network with Psychedelics is Good for Mental Health

pamela 📅 January 14, 2020

How To Tame the "Default Mode" of Your Wild Mind

Liberate yourself from repetitive, unhelpful thought patterns in 5 steps

**The Default Mode Network: The Hidden Key to a  
Calmer, Happier, Content You**

# JUST SO STORIES

FOR LITTLE CHILDREN



RUDYARD KIPLING

## The Default-Mode Network Example

- DMN assoc w/ self-processing
- Psychedelics reduce DMN activity
- Psychedelics cause “ego dissolution”

# JUST SO STORIES

FOR LITTLE CHILDREN



RUDYARD KIPLING

## The Default-Mode Network Example

- DMN assoc w/ self-processing
- Psychedelics reduce DMN activity
- Psychedelics cause “ego dissolution”
  
- dMn IS tHE egO
- dmn reDUctION IS The meChanIsM OF pSYcHEDELIC ego dISsOLUTION

# JUST SO STORIES

FOR LITTLE CHILDREN



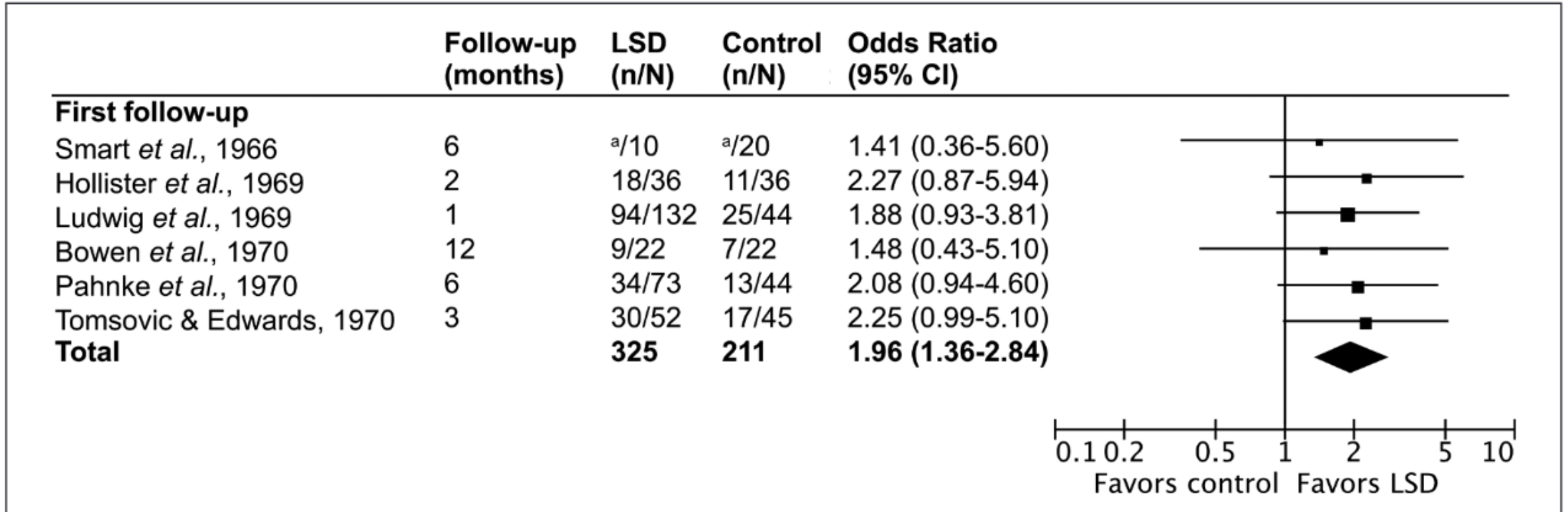
RUDYARD KIPLING

## The Default-Mode Network Example

- However:
  - DMN decoherence rarely the strongest effect
  - Doesn't always correlate well with relevant subjective measures
  - Seen with other drugs

# Meta-Analysis of controlled trials of LSD for Alcoholism: Across studies, LSD doubled the odds a patient would be alcohol free

Krebs T S , Johansen P J Psychopharmacol 2012;26:994-1002



**Figure 2.** Improvement on alcohol misuse at the first available follow-up after LSD versus control treatments.

<sup>a</sup>Continuous outcome data.

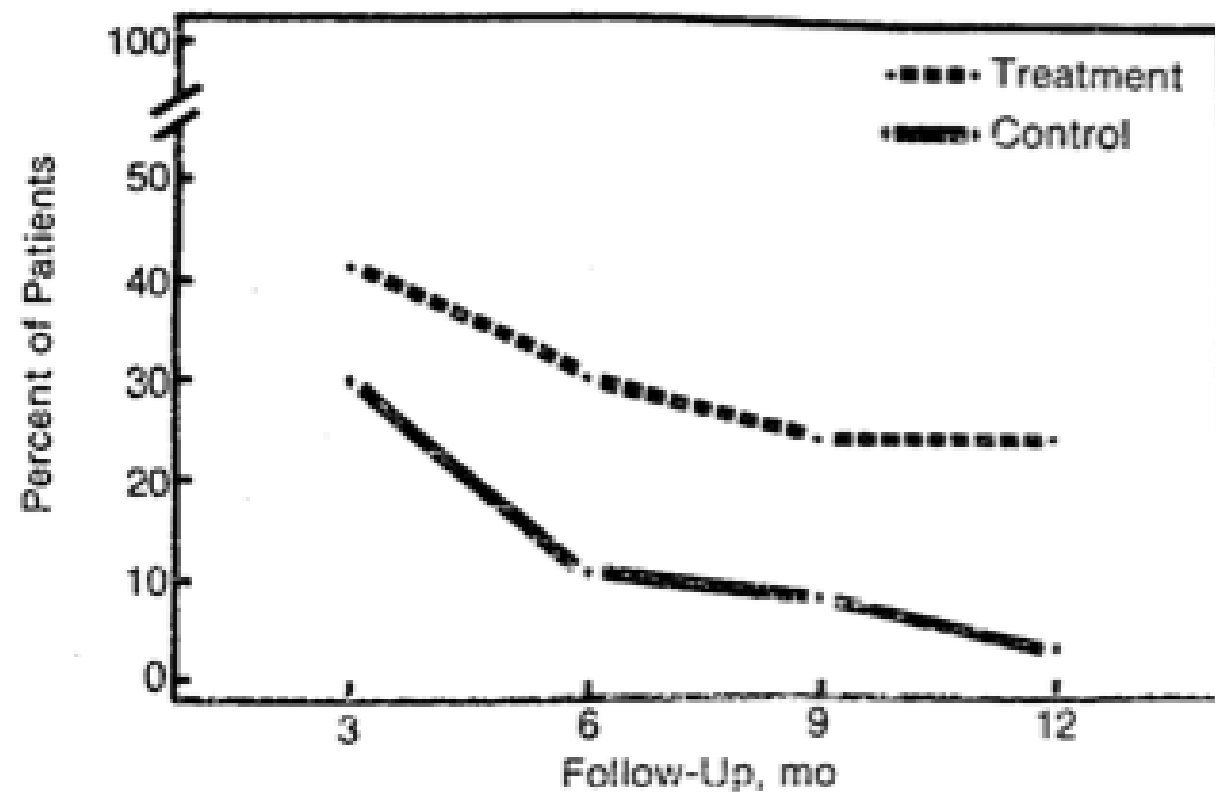


# Residential Psychedelic (LSD) Therapy for the Narcotic Addict

A Controlled Study

Charles Savage, MD, O. Lee McCabe, PhD, Baltimore

Fig 1.—Percent of patients maintaining total abstinence at 3-, 6-, 9-, and 12-month follow-up.



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Effects of Nicotine Patch vs Varenicline vs Combination Nicotine Replacement Therapy on Smoking Cessation at 26 Weeks: A Randomized Clinical Trial. *JAMA*, 315(4), 371–379.

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Carhart-Harris, R. L., Kaelen, M., Whalley, M. G., Bolstridge, M., Feilding, A., & Nutt, D. J. (2015). LSD enhances suggestibility in healthy volunteers. *Psychopharmacology*, 232(4), 785–794.

Carhart-Harris, R., Giribaldi, B., Watts, R., Baker-Jones, M., Murphy-Beiner, A., Murphy, R., Martell, J., Blemings, A., Erritzoe, D., & Nutt, D. J. (2021). Trial of Psilocybin versus Escitalopram for Depression. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 384(15), 1402–1411.

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