



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

December 3, 2024

The Honorable Jack Bergman
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative Bergman:

Thank you for your August 2, 2024, co-signed letter to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) regarding posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and suicide among Veterans and Service members, and treatment options like 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA)-assisted therapy. The White House has asked us to respond on its behalf, and I appreciate the opportunity to provide more information.

For questions about any Food and Drug Administration (FDA) actions, we refer you directly to the FDA.

VA has been actively conducting research of certain psychedelic compounds—including MDMA and psilocybin—using external funds for years. Our funding announcement in early 2024 marks the first time that VA will begin funding clinical research on such compounds since the 1960s. In collaboration with academic institutions, VA issued a request for applications (RFA) for proposals from its network of VA researchers to study the use of certain psychedelic compounds in treating PTSD and depression. This new RFA paved the way for the next step of directly assessing effectiveness and safety of using MDMA- and psilocybin-augmented psychotherapy in Veterans. More information can be found [here \(https://news.va.gov/press-room/to-improve-care-for-veterans-va-to-fund-studies-on-new-therapies-for-treating-mental-health-conditions/\)](https://news.va.gov/press-room/to-improve-care-for-veterans-va-to-fund-studies-on-new-therapies-for-treating-mental-health-conditions/).

As a result of this effort, we are announcing today that we will fund a study on MDMA-assisted therapy for PTSD and alcohol use disorder (AUD) among Veterans. VA researchers affiliated with Brown University and Yale University will evaluate the potential of MDMA-assisted therapy as a treatment option for Veterans with both PTSD and AUD. Participants will receive psychotherapy sessions enhanced by MDMA, a psychedelic compound believed to increase emotional openness, reduce fear, and promote introspection during therapy. Some participants will be randomly chosen to receive an active placebo, which will be a lower dose of MDMA.

The study is scheduled to take place at the Providence VA Medical Center in Rhode Island and the West Haven VA Medical Center in Connecticut and is anticipated to begin enrollment in fiscal year 2025. The grant award is approximately \$1.5 million over 5 years. As with all VA studies, treatments will be conducted in a clinical setting

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with strict safety protocols and following all appropriate Federal guidelines for conducting studies with controlled substances. Pharmaceutical-grade MDMA will be used, and participants will be closely monitored to ensure their well-being throughout the study.

Through this research and future studies, we are gathering rigorous scientific evidence on the potential efficacy and safety of psychedelic compounds when used in conjunction with therapeutic approaches. All studies have been and will continue to be conducted under stringent safety protocols. VA is committed to exploring all avenues that promote the health of the Nation's Veterans.

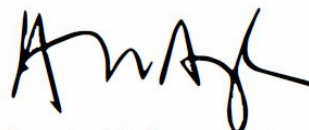
Our mission is to serve those who served our country and to provide them with world-class health care and benefits. In addition to researching psychedelics, we offer Veterans a comprehensive suite of health care and treatments for substance use, PTSD, and other mental health conditions.

We will continue to provide Veterans with the mental health care and support they need—whenever and wherever they need it. Our proven, evidence-based care options for Veterans experiencing [post-traumatic stress](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/) (<https://www.ptsd.va.gov/>) or depression include mental health care at VA facilities, assistance with reintegration into their communities, counseling at [Vet Centers](https://www.vetcenter.va.gov/) (<https://www.vetcenter.va.gov/>) across America, 24/7 access to qualified crisis responders at the Veterans Crisis Line, [free care](https://news.va.gov/press-room/va-provides-free-emergency-suicide-prevention-care-to-nearly-50000/) at any VA or non-VA facility (<https://news.va.gov/press-room/va-provides-free-emergency-suicide-prevention-care-to-nearly-50000/>) for Veterans experiencing a suicidal crisis, and [much more](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/) (<https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/>).

We are here for all Veterans. I cannot stress this enough. If a Veteran is in crisis or someone is concerned about a Veteran, they may contact the Veterans Crisis Line to receive 24/7 confidential support. To reach responders, the caller need only dial 988 then press 1. They may also chat online at <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help-now/chat/> or text 838255.

Thank you for your continued support of our mission. I have sent a similar letter to the other signatories.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "DMcDonough", written in a cursive style.

Denis McDonough