

Classic psychedelic use found to be protective with regard to psychological distress and suicidality, study finds

January 21 2015, by Nicole Wyatt



Classic psychedelics, such as LSD, psilocybin mushrooms and mescaline, previously have been shown to occasion lasting improvements in mental health. But researchers led by University of Alabama at

Birmingham School of Public Health investigators wanted to advance the existing research and determine whether classic psychedelics might be protective with regard to suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

Approximately 30,000 lives in the United States are claimed by suicide every year, and more than 90 percent of victims have been diagnosed with [mental illness](#), according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

Using data from more than 190,000 respondents of the [National Survey on Drug Use and Health from 2008-2012](#), the researchers found that those who reported ever having used a classic psychedelic drug in their lifetime had a decreased likelihood of psychological distress in the past month, and decreased suicidal thinking, planning and attempts in the past year.

"Despite advances in [mental health](#) treatments, [suicide rates](#) generally have not declined in the past 60 years. Novel and potentially more effective interventions need to be explored," said Peter S. Hendricks, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Department of Health Behavior and lead study author. "This study sets the stage for future research to test the efficacy of classic psychedelics in addressing suicidality as well as pathologies associated with increased [suicide risk](#) (e.g., affective disturbance, addiction and impulsive-aggressive personality traits)."

Hendricks says the take-home message from this study is that classic psychedelics may hold great promise in the prevention of suicide and evaluating the therapeutic effectiveness of classic psychedelics should be a priority for future research.

This study was recently published in the *Journal of Psychopharmacology*.

More information: "Classic psychedelic use is associated with

reduced psychological distress and suicidality in the United States adult":
population [jop.sagepub.com/content/early/ ... gHrCV&keytype=finite](http://jop.sagepub.com/content/early/...gHrCV&keytype=finite)

Provided by University of Alabama at Birmingham

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