

Professor Allan H Young  
Centre for Affective Disorders  
Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience  
King's College London  
PO72, De Crespigny Park  
Denmark Hill  
London SE5 8AF  
Tel: 02078485895  
PA: Caroline Loveland  
Email: [caroline.loveland@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:caroline.loveland@kcl.ac.uk)

The Rt Hon Kit Malthouse MP  
Minister of State (Minister for Crime and Policing)  
2 Marsham Street,  
City of Westminster.  
London SW1P 4DF

The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP  
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care  
39 Victoria Street,  
London SW1H 0EU

22nd February 2022

Dear Mr Malthouse and Mr Javid,

It has come to our attention that the Home Office is aware of the issues surrounding psilocybin's current scheduling under the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001. Research into its potential—as a medicine and as an experimental tool—is all but foreclosed to numerous UK higher education institutions and businesses. This is a serious and easily corrected situation which requires action, it is our recommendation that the Chief Medical Officer assess the evidence for the harms and utility of psilocybin with a view to rescheduling to Schedule 2 with restrictions to prevent inappropriate prescribing while facilitating research in the UK.

Recently Compass Pathways, a British company listed on the NASDAQ, published the topline results of their phase IIb trial of psilocybin for treatment resistant depression - with impressive results. This is the largest randomised, controlled, double-blinded trial to look at psilocybin and has raised hopes that it could become a safe and effective medical product. The results of this trial show that psilocybin-assisted therapy can have rapid and durable clinically significant effects on severe depression. Most of the participants who received the 25mg dose of psilocybin, alongside psychotherapy, experienced reductions in symptoms from the first assessment post-dose (day 2) for upto 12 weeks. It is worth mentioning that this is after a single dose of a drug that remains on the site of the hospital in which it is administered, meaning the chances of diversion are extremely low; especially when one considers that there is no evidence of increased diversion of Schedule 2 controlled substances from research settings compared with those in Schedule 1.

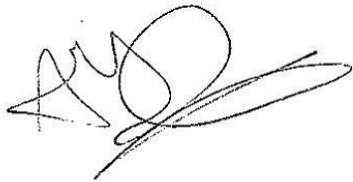
Psilocybin's promise lies not only in its potential as a treatment for depression but as an adjunct to the psychotherapeutic treatment of a variety of internalising disorders which implicate similar psychological

mechanisms and brain regions. This compound is now being investigated as an adjunct to the psychotherapeutic treatment of anorexia nervosa, obesity, post traumatic stress disorder and addictions to alcohol, cocaine and tobacco. If research was to be facilitated, we may come to learn that many other psychiatric disorders could be amenable to this novel treatment option. But psilocybin's utility should not be thought of as restricted to its administration as a medicine. When administered as a pharmacological challenge, changes in brain activity can be brought to light that inform our understanding of functional brain architectures and processing, advancing human knowledge and translational applications. The Schedule 1 designation of psilocybin and the other psychedelics is having the profound effect of impeding this kind of research, as many institutions simply do not have the economic and temporal resources to secure the necessary licenses. Frustratingly, the Home Office's position which appears to be that it will only look at rescheduling when a product reaches market authorisation, is not stipulated in law and is inconsistent with the precedent set by cannabis based products for medicinal use in 2018.

While the upcoming ACMD review of barriers to researching Schedule 1 drugs may make recommendations which go some way to addressing the barriers to research faced by UK scientists, for which we are grateful, another pertinent issue presents itself. The Government has confirmed that there has been no recent review of the evidence for psilocybin's current scheduling. Having assessed the evidence and history of this legislation ourselves, we understand that there is not and has never been an evidential basis for psilocybin's current scheduling, based as it is on the UN Single Convention on Psychotropic Substances 1971. This is strange given the emerging evidence of psilocybin's therapeutic potential and clear neuroscience research utility.

We feel it is our duty as independent experts in the field of psychiatry and neuroscience to request you commission the Chief Medical Officer assess the evidence for the harms and utility of psilocybin with a view to rescheduling this promising medicine and experimentally useful compound at the earliest opportunity.

Yours, with best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Young', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Professor Allan H Young MB ChB, MPhil, PhD, FRCP (Edin), FRCPsych, FRCP(C), FRSB.  
Director, Centre for Affective Disorders  
Department of Psychological Medicine,  
NIHR Senior Investigator,  
Academic Director Psychological Medicine and Older Adults Clinical Academic Group  
Immediate Past-President of International Society for Affective Disorders  
President of the British Association for Psychopharmacology  
Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience  
King's College London  
PO72, De Crespigny Park, SE5 8AF, London, UK

Karl Friston.

Karl J. Friston, MBBS, MA, MRCPsych, MAE, FMedSci, FRBS, FRS  
Scientific Director: Wellcome Centre for Human Neuroimaging  
Professor: Queen Square Institute of Neurology, University College London  
Honorary Consultant: The National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery  
Wellcome Centre for Human Neuroimaging  
12 Queen Sq, WC1N 3AR, London, UK

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sir Wessely". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Prof Sir Simon Wessely MA, BM, BCh, MSc, MD, FRCP, FRCPsych, FMedSci, FKC  
Regius Professor of Psychiatry, Head of the Department of Psychological Medicine  
Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience  
King's College London  
PO72, De Crespigny Park, SE5 8AF, London, UK

Copies to:

Jeremy Hunt MP  
Committee Chair, Health and Social Care Committee

Crispin Blunt MP  
Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group for Drug Policy Reform

Jeff Smith MP  
Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group for Mental Health

Dan Zeichner MP  
Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group for Life Sciences

Dr Adrian James  
President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists