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Title

Vermont Stakeholder Views Regarding Psychedelics in 2023

Priority 1 (Research Category)

Behavioral, psychosocial, and mental illness

Presenters

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Abstract

Context: While Indigenous communities have used psychedelics for millennia, scientific research on these substances is limited. Following a rise in recreational use of psychedelics during the Counterculture Movement of the 1960s, many psychedelics were restricted by the Drug Enforcement Agency. The past fifteen years has seen an increase in research regarding the therapeutic potential of psychedelics, especially for mental health indications. Many states and local jurisdictions are easing restrictions on access to some of these substances for medical or more widespread use.

Objective: To assess stakeholder opinions regarding psychedelics in Vermont

Analysis: Following a literature review, an interview guide was developed to explore current attitudes on the state of psychedelic policy, training, and treatment practices. Using thematic analysis, interview transcripts were coded and themes developed via group consensus.

Setting: Community stakeholders in Vermont

Population: Convenience sample of 16 healthcare providers, public health officials, legislators, investors, advocates, and law enforcement officers

Instrument: Semi-structured interview

Outcome Measures: Attitudes towards psychedelics, awareness of psychedelic use, and potential concerns

Results: Three main themes emerged: On the ENVIRONMENT, there was cautious optimism among stakeholders that psychedelic therapies may have a big impact on the treatment of mental health and an awareness that many jurisdictions are increasing access. The growing mental health crisis in the US was seen as a driver of need for new approaches. IMPLEMENTATION was seen as critical, including 1) medical vs personal use model of adoption, 2) the importance of the user's mindset and the setting of use, and 3) the regulations around education, and access. Participants also had CONCERNS. On safety,

the substances are seen to be non-toxic but further research is needed before widespread adoption is recommended. On accessibility, participants were concerned about costs and equity in access. Finally, participants were concerned about overzealousness and widespread use preceding knowledge about the risks and benefits.

Conclusions: Psychedelics are undergoing a cultural and scientific revival, driven by evolving legislation and renewed academic interest. The growing body of research indicates promise in addressing intractable mental health disorders, Vermont stakeholders are cautious about hasty implementation and overzealousness.