

# Findings Imply Psilocybin Improves MDD in Cancer Patients

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**Received** 15 September 2021; **Accepted** 29 September 2021; **Published** 06 October 2021

## Introduction

The findings show that psilocybin therapy could assist cancer patients improve their quality of life.

In an open-label study of psilocybin therapy for depression in cancer patients, 50% of those who received COMP360 psilocybin therapy experienced remission of depressive symptoms within one week.

The study comprised 30 patients who had been diagnosed with major depressive disorder (MDD) with cancer at various stages and were conducted by Maryland Oncology Hematology at the Aquilino Cancer Center in Rockville. All of the individuals were undergoing cancer treatment, half had been prescribed antidepressants for their current depressive episode, and 19 had never used psychedelics before. Patients were given a 25 mg dose of COMP360 from COMPASS Pathways, as well as psychological support from fully qualified therapists. Patients tolerated COMP360 psilocybin therapy well, with no significant side effects. The study's 8-week follow-up phase revealed that remission had been maintained [1].

"For the staff at Aquilino Cancer Center, my colleagues at COMPASS, and the mental health and oncology communities, this is an interesting study." It is a forerunner in a novel approach to cancer patients' mental health issues. According to Guy Goodwin, FMedSci, DPhil, FRCPsych, chief medical officer of COMPASS Pathways, "simultaneous administration of COMP360 psilocybin therapy looks to be well tolerated and viable." Goodwin is also an emeritus professor of psychiatry at the University of Oxford, where he previously served as the WA Handley Chair of Psychiatry and the head of the Department of Psychiatry.

Preparation, medication delivery, and integration are the three stages of psilocybin therapy, as used in this study. Therapists assist patients in understanding their symptoms and preparing for the medication's psychological or emotional effects during the preparatory stage. During the administration session, therapists keep an eye on the patient and ensure that he or she is safe over the next 6-8 hours. During the integration stage, therapists discuss any psychedelic experiences that the patient may have had as a result of the medicine and assist the patient in interpreting these experiences [2]. "During their 6- to 8-hour encounter, between 2 to 4 patients were given a 25mg dose of COMP360 psilocybin therapy at the same time, in conjunction with 1-on-1 assistance from a

specialty-trained therapist," Goodwin told Psychiatric Times™ in the COMPASS Pathways open-label trial. "This is the first clinical experiment to investigate the safety and practicality of psilocybin therapy in multiple patients at the same time while also providing one-on-one psychological support."

COMP360, a synthetic formulation of psilocybin, the active element in some species of mushrooms known as "magic mushrooms," was given to patients in this trial [3]. In February 2018, the US Food and Medication Administration designated the drug as a breakthrough therapy [4]. Because neither the participants nor the raters were blinded to the treatment choice, the researchers admitted that expectancy bias may have influenced the results.

Improved treatment strategies for MDD and other depressive disorders in cancer patients are of relevance because research reveals that patients with comorbid cancer and depressive disorders have a worse prognosis and that these patients are more likely to have suicidal ideation and complete suicide [5]. "To provide holistic cancer care, we must focus on whole-person healing, which includes our patients' mental health." This isn't frequently discussed today, but it's past time to take action. "These findings suggest that psilocybin therapy may be beneficial in the treatment of MDD in cancer patients, and we look forward to conducting further research and following up with additional studies," said researcher.

"Because more than 80% of cancer patients in the United States are treated at community cancer centres," says Goodwin, "doing research in this setting enables a real-world context to test medicines in a site where patients are already seeking and receiving care" [6,7]. "We anticipate the findings of this study will have a significant impact on how we help cancer patients cope with the psychological effects of their diagnosis." The improvement of patients' mental health is the driving force behind everything we do."

## References

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