



Adapting the Safe Consumption Site Model for Patient-Procured MDMA

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Patient Access in Canada

Increasing demand for access to psychedelic therapy within Western medicine has given rise to a concerning trend in Canada, where individuals are increasingly resorting to self-medication with psychedelic substances or turning to unregulated psychedelic-assisted therapy.

- Growing interest in honoring Indigenous ways of knowing and healing, including the traditional use of psychoactive substances.
- Risks associated with unregulated practices, including the prevalence of tainted drug supplies and the lack of protective measures
- Healthcare providers increasingly find themselves navigating the underground terrain.

To ensure the best possible mental health care for all Canadians, we advocate for three key pillars:

- A Safe Drug Supply - require that substances used for treatment purposes are regulated and screened through reliable drug testing services.
- Regulated Medical Supervision - healthcare professionals should oversee and manage care, providing guidance and personalized treatment plans to address unique care needs.
- Comprehensive Therapeutic Support - access to various evidence-based therapeutic options adapted to patient- specific needs. This would increase potential for recovery and enhance overall well-being.

Methods

We present an adapted harm reduction approach tailored for psychedelics, with a focus on supporting safe MDMA consumption.

This innovative approach offers support to persons who have self-procured psychedelic substances for mental health indications, or for those who feel these medicines might offer benefits beyond the treatment of a defined mental disorder.

This model incorporates the essential safety standards for those exploring alternative mental health treatments, laying the scientific and legal groundwork for a comprehensive harm reduction and wellness strategy.

The Safe Consumption Site Framework



Patient book in at Roots to Thrive for the MDMA-assisted therapy program and must be eligible for the program according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria which can be found online.



Patients procure MDMA on their own through Pharmala, Canada's only SAP approved supplier or else MDMA procured personally is subject to drug-testing for contaminants



Patients are introduced to their therapists who are consistent from Preparation, Medicine Session, through to Integration.



Preparation typically involves 1-4 sessions with the therapist, and includes initiating an ongoing informed consent process, discussing concerns or fears, establishing boundaries and agreements for the session, cultivating a strong therapeutic alliance, intention setting, and managing expectations.



Preparation and Integration therapy include talk therapy modalities using the Roots to Thrive Community of Practice framework.



Following a medicine session, typically 1-6 integration sessions are provided to help patients continue to make meaning of their experience and to integrate insights and apply new perspectives to their daily life.

A legal rationale for implementing a harm reduction approach

1. Inaccessibility of Clinical Care: Currently, the illegal status of MDMA renders clinical care for medically supported PaT unavailable for most within the existing medical system.
2. Need for Medical Exemption: A medical exemption for MDMA is necessary to grant individuals access to the medical supervision they are rightfully entitled to and protect responsible practitioners from legal exposure
3. Limitations of Health Canada's Special Access Program (SAP): While the SAP exists for accessing MDMA, only one was granted in the first 6 months of 2023
4. Precedent Using Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms: Providing regulated medical supervision for the consumption of psychedelic substances in the current prohibitive environment is supported by Section 7 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which guarantees the right to "life, liberty, and security of person" for all individuals.
5. Extending Legal Reasoning to Psychedelic Consumption Support: Building upon these legal precedents, it can be argued that psychedelic medicines, such as MDMA, represent reasonable medical choices and potentially more effective treatments for individuals experiencing end-of-life distress and other conditions when other options have failed.

The restriction on psychedelic medicines, despite their growing utilization in self-treating mental health conditions, curtails medical users' freedom and denies them potentially superior options. This predicament compels individuals to decide between inadequate legal treatments and potentially beneficial but illegal alternatives, putting their well-being at risk and infringing upon their personal security. Drawing on principles applied in cannabis cases, it becomes reasonable to create a harm reduction pathway that facilitates medical supervision and safe access to these substances.