

Exploring the perceived usefulness of integration support after naturalistic psychedelic experiences in people concerned about their substance use: a survey

Sophie van der Helder¹⁻³, Krista J Siefried²⁻⁴, Maureen Steele⁴, Jonathan Brett⁵⁻⁶

¹*School of Biomedical Sciences, UNSW Sydney, Sydney, Australia,* ²*The National Centre for Clinical Research on Emerging Drugs, UNSW Sydney, Sydney, Australia,* ³*National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW Sydney, Sydney, Australia,* ⁴*Alcohol and Drug Service, St Vincent's Hospital Sydney, Sydney, Australia,* ⁵*Clinical Pharmacology and Toxicology, St. Vincent's Hospital Sydney, Sydney, Australia,* ⁶*St. Vincent's Clinical School, UNSW Sydney, Sydney, Australia.*

Presenter's email: s.vanderhelder@unsw.edu.au

Introduction: Research is experiencing a 'psychedelic renaissance', with compounds being investigated after a period of intense criminalisation. Various clinical and non-clinical ('naturalistic') research has described improved outcomes for substance use disorders, highlighting the importance of further evaluation given the treatment-resistant nature. This exploratory study aimed to describe the experiences of people who have used psychedelics in a naturalistic setting and are concerned about their substance use, to identify the need for integration (i.e., post-dosing) support following naturalistic psychedelic use as a vehicle to achieve positive change, and if detected, what format of delivery was preferred by potential clients to enhance the co-design process necessary for developing a new service.

Methods: English-speaking participants aged ≥ 18 years ($n=108$), who were concerned about their substance use and had consumed a classical psychedelic at least once in the past year, were recruited online for a 10–20-minute survey. Questions centred around experiences of psychedelic use and perceptions on integration support. Data was analysed descriptively.

Results: Most participants ($n=94$, 87.0%) thought that psychedelic integration support would have been useful, with the majority ($n=61$, 56.5%) endorsing a model of individual support, led by a psychologist ($n=63$, 58.3%) or peer worker ($n=55$, 50.9%), and primarily focusing on how to apply the insights gained in the psychedelic experience into life ($n=68$, 63.0%).

Discussions and Conclusions: Overall, findings indicate a need for further investigation of integration support. While a preference for individual support was observed in our study, the potential value of a group format should not be ignored due to several advantages over an individual approach (e.g., accessibility, cost), and smaller yet substantial interest in this format within the described sample. Overall, this exploratory study contributed to the discourse surrounding naturalistic psychedelic use and how services can best support individuals through adapting integration practices in clinical psychedelic research.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: None to declare.