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# 'Magic mushrooms' for eating disorders? Drug company running trials at B.C. university



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Published Tuesday, February 2, 2021 10:17AM PST



FILE - In this Aug. 3, 2007, file photo, psilocybin mushrooms are seen in a grow room at the Procare farm in Hazerswoude, central Netherlands. (AP Photo/Peter Dejong, File)

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VANCOUVER -- A Vancouver-based psychedelic drug development company is investigating whether a substance known colloquially as "magic mushrooms" could be used to treat eating disorders.

A preclinical trial is underway at the University of British Columbia on the use of psilocybin as a treatment for obesity.

The trial is being conducted by NeonMind Biosciences Inc., a company that is developing products containing legal medicinal mushrooms.

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NeonMind is working with Dr. C. Laird Birmingham, a psychiatry professor at UBC whose expertise includes eating disorders.

In a statement sent by NeonMind, Birmingham said one of the challenges in treatment of obesity is weight management.

"Most people lose weight, but they rarely maintain," he said.

"Psilocybin has the potential to serve as a new and different tool to help people lose weight and maintain their weight loss by changing their neural pathways."

The goal of the trials is, in part, to examine whether psychedelics like psilocybin are capable of changing unconscious responses to emotional situations that can trigger addictions, including food-related addictions.

The doctor said there's potential to "reset the behaviours and cognitions that link life stress and trauma to eating behaviours."

NeonMind said its next step will be developing a second phase of its trial.

Previous research from UBC suggested there has been some success with the controlled use of psilocybin to treat [post-traumatic stress disorder \(PTSD\)](#) and [addiction](#).

Another study suggested psychedelic drug use could be associated with [better regulation of emotions](#), and with reduced partner violence in men.

There's been a growing push for the [medical use of psilocybin](#) in Canada as evidence supporting its use as a treatment for anxiety and depression builds.

A study last year suggested a single dose of the compound found in several species of mushrooms can provide [long-term relief of those mental illnesses](#) in cancer patients, for example.

And last month, Canada's first terminally ill cancer patient to legally use "shrooms" for his anxiety [told The Canadian Press](#) he's hopeful the federal government will approve it permanently.

Some cities south of the border have made the sale of magic mushrooms legal, and the debate was [brought to Vancouver City Hall](#) in 2019.

The motion was rejected after several hours of heated debate.

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