

ADVERTISEMENT

RETURN TO ISSUE

< PREV **ARTICLE** NEXT >



[Get e-Alerts](#)

# Acute and Sustained Reductions in Loss of Meaning and Suicidal Ideation Following Psilocybin-Assisted Psychotherapy for Psychiatric and Existential Distress in Life-Threatening Cancer

Stephen Ross\*, Gabrielle Agin-Liebes, Sharon Lo, Richard J. Zeifman, Leila Ghazal, Julia Benville, Silvia Franco Corso, Christian Bjerre Real, Jeffrey Guss, Anthony Bossis, and Sarah E. Mennenga

✓ **Cite this:** *ACS Pharmacol. Transl. Sci.* 2021, 4, 2, 553–562

Publication Date: March 18, 2021 ▾

<https://doi.org/10.1021/acspsci.1c00020>

Copyright © 2021 American Chemical Society

[RIGHTS & PERMISSIONS](#)

Article Views	Altmetric	Citations
1660	38	1

[LEARN ABOUT THESE METRICS](#)

Share Add to Export



PDF (2 MB)



Access Through Your Institution

## More Access Options

This website uses cookies to improve your user experience. By continuing to use the site, you are accepting our use of cookies. [Read the ACS privacy policy.](#)

**CONTINUE**



People with advanced cancer are at heightened risk of desire for hastened death (DHD), suicidal ideation (SI), and completed suicide. Loss of Meaning (LoM), a component of demoralization, can be elevated by a cancer diagnosis and predicts DHD and SI in this population. We completed a randomized controlled trial in which psilocybin-assisted psychotherapy (PAP) produced rapid and sustained improvements in depression, demoralization, and hopelessness in people with cancer. Converging epidemiologic and clinical trial findings suggests a potential antisuicidal effect of this treatment. To probe our hypothesis that PAP relieves SI through its beneficial impacts on depression and demoralization (LoM in particular), we performed secondary analyses assessing within- and between-group differences with regard to LoM and an SI composite score. Among participants with elevated SI at baseline, PAP was associated with within-group reductions in SI that were apparent as early as 8 h and persisted for 6.5 months postdosing. PAP also produced large reductions in LoM from baseline that were apparent 2 weeks after treatment and remained significant and robust at the 6.5 month and 3.2 and 4.5 year follow-ups. Exploratory analyses support our hypothesis and suggest that PAP may be an effective antisuicidal intervention following a cancer diagnosis due to its positive impact on hopelessness and demoralization and its effects on meaning-making in particular. These preliminary results implicate psilocybin treatment as a potentially effective alternative to existing antidepressant medications in patients with cancer that are also suicidal, and warrant further investigation in participants with elevated levels of depression and suicidality.

**KEYWORDS:** [psilocybin](#), [psychedelic](#), [cancer](#), [depression](#), [suicidal ideation](#), [demoralization](#), [loss of](#) 

This website uses cookies to improve your user experience. By continuing to use the site, you are accepting our use of cookies. [Read the ACS privacy policy.](#)

**CONTINUE**



Access through your institution

**Log In with ACS ID**

**Purchase Access**

**Purchase this article for 48 hours**

Already purchased with Guest checkout?

[Restore Access](#)

ACS members enjoy benefits including 50 free articles a year and reduced priced individual subscription.

[Learn More](#)

[Forgot ACS ID or Password?](#)

[Help](#)

## Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge at <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acscptsci.1c00020>.

- Responses to individual suicidal ideation items ([PDF](#))

This website uses cookies to improve your user experience. By continuing to use the site, you are accepting our use of cookies. [Read the ACS privacy policy.](#)

**CONTINUE**

## Supporting In

# Acute and Sustained Reductions in Loss of M Psilocybin-Assisted Psychotherapy for Psyc Threatening

Stephen Ross, M.D.,<sup>1,2,3\*</sup> Gabrielle Agin-Liebes, Ph



## Terms & Conditions

Electronic Supporting Information files are available without a subscription to ACS Web Editions. The American Chemical Society holds a copyright ownership interest in any copyrightable Supporting Information. Files available from the ACS website may be downloaded for personal use only. Users are not otherwise permitted to reproduce, republish, redistribute, or sell any Supporting Information from the ACS website, either in whole or in part, in either machine-readable form or any other form without permission from the American Chemical Society. For permission to reproduce, republish and redistribute this material, requesters must process their own requests via the RightsLink permission system. Information about how to use the RightsLink permission system can

This website uses cookies to improve your user experience. By continuing to use the site, you are accepting our use of cookies. [Read the ACS privacy policy.](#)

**CONTINUE**

This article is cited by 1 publications.

1. David E. Olson. The Promise of Psychedelic Science. *ACS Pharmacology & Translational Science* 2021, 4 (2) , 413-415. <https://doi.org/10.1021/acspsci.1c00071>

### Partners



1155 Sixteenth Street N.W.  
Washington, DC 20036  
Copyright © 2021  
American Chemical Society

### About

- About ACS Publications
- ACS & Open Access
- ACS Membership

### Resources and Information

- Journals A-Z
- Books and Reference
- Advertising Media Kit
- Institutional Sales
- ACS Publishing Center
- Business Relations

### Support & Contact

- Help
- Live Chat
- FAQ

This website uses cookies to improve your user experience. By continuing to use the site, you are accepting our use of cookies. [Read the ACS privacy policy.](#)

**CONTINUE**

This website uses cookies to improve your user experience. By continuing to use the site, you are accepting our use of cookies. [Read the ACS privacy policy.](#)

**CONTINUE**