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Harvard Law School launches research initiative focused on psychedelics and the law

“There is no systematic research being done on psychedelics law, and POPLAR will fill this gap.”

Sam Riches

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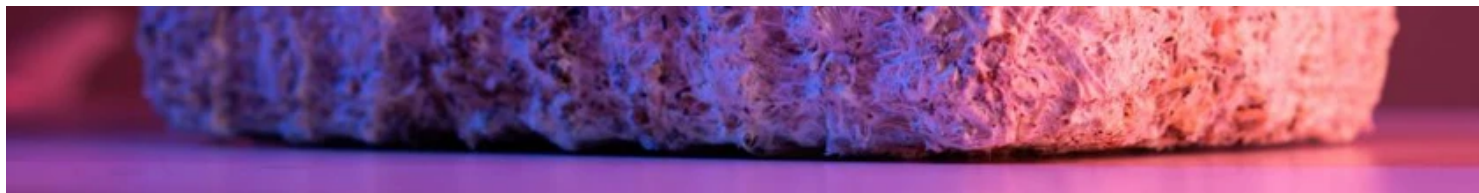
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The three-year project will seek to promote safety, innovation, and equity in psychedelics research, commerce and therapeutics. PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES

Harvard Law School is starting a new research initiative focused on psychedelic law and regulation.

The Petrie-Flom Center for Health Law Policy, Biotechnology, and Bioethics announced the Project on Psychedelics Law and Regulation (POPLAR) earlier this week.



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The three-year project will seek to promote safety, innovation, and equity in psychedelics research, commerce and therapeutics.

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But with most private companies focusing on research and drug development, POPLAR will narrow the gap surrounding psychedelic law, said Mason Marks, senior fellow and project lead on POPLAR.

“Right now, there are a handful of psychedelics research centers at universities around the country. However, they are focused on clinical research,” he said. “There is no systematic research being done on psychedelics law, and POPLAR will fill this gap.”

Marks also serves on Oregon Psilocybin Advisory Board. In November, voters in Oregon elected to legalize and regulate therapeutic psilocybin and decriminalize small amounts of all drugs.

According to the release, research at POPLAR will focus on five key areas: ethics in psychedelics research and therapeutics, challenges at the intersection of psychedelics and intellectual property law, opportunities for federal support of psychedelics research, access to psychedelic therapies and equity in emerging psychedelics industries, and the role of psychedelics in healing trauma.

“By analyzing social, legal, and political barriers to access in this context, we hope to advance the understanding of [psychedelics] potential impact as therapeutics,” said Jeannie Suk Gersen, John H. Watson Jr. Professor of Law at Harvard Law School.

Marks told *The Harvard Crimson* that psychedelics are “one of the most exciting and promising new technologies in mental health care to come along for decades, and they could represent a true paradigm shift for mental health care and neuroscience research in general.”

Earlier this year, Canadian healthcare professionals took part in a historic psilocybin therapy training program launched by TheraPsil, a B.C.-based non-profit.

The training program focuses on delivering legal, psilocybin-assisted therapy for Canadians experiencing end-of-life and illness-related distress, such as cancer anxiety, depression and demoralization.

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