

Fostering Nurse Engagement in Psychedelic-Assisted Therapies for Patients with Serious Illness

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Dear Editor:

We applaud the findings of Beaussant and colleagues¹ in defining the research priorities for psychedelic-assisted therapies in palliative care. The innovative conceptual framework posed for integrating these therapies into extant care delivery models promotes the strategic use of psychedelic-assisted interventions capable of reaching those patients most in need. A recent scoping review of psychedelic-assisted therapies with a focus on mental health, addictions, and palliative care highlights that nursing involvement in the relevant literature is noticeably absent.² The invisibility of nurses and nursing in the emergent field of psychedelic-assisted therapy is an omission we call upon our colleagues in medicine to help us rectify. Our recommendations are critical to both the future of psychedelic-assisted therapies and associated patient outcomes.

First, we strongly encourage increased nurse engagement in the ongoing research and interdisciplinary scholarly development in the field. Nurses—often at the frontlines of care delivery and with the highest proportion of direct patient contact time among health professionals—were notably absent from this current study.¹ Although we appreciate nurse involvement in refining the interview guide, to our knowledge only one nurse was interviewed for their expert input. Increased nurse utilization in this field includes their full involvement in therapeutic administration and assistance during psychedelic therapies, planning and implementation of clinical trials, and the synthesis and dissemination of findings.

Second, both palliative care and nursing as disciplines are rooted in the individualized and holistic needs of patients and families. Given the clinical and interpersonal priorities of nurses caring for the seriously ill in both acute and hospice settings, they are uniquely positioned to address the emotional, spiritual, and physical concerns of patients at end of life and those undergoing psychedelic therapy. A nursing

perspective is crucial to ensure an integrative and transdisciplinary perspective that will responsibly inform the seamless integration of psychedelic-assisted therapies in the future.³

Third, nurses comprise 59% of the global healthcare workforce and deliver up to 90% of primary care services worldwide.⁴ In an era of widespread task shifting and increased nursing leadership, the World Health Organization designated 2020 the International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife. The time is upon the health care system to ensure nurses are at the forefront of these advances in psychiatric care for our global village. Whatever the possibilities for psychedelic-assisted therapy, they will be both constrained and elusive if we do not invest in the improved capacity building of nurses as clinical therapists, researchers, and respected partners in this field.

Nurses—repeatedly noted as the most trusted of professionals—promote relationship-based care throughout the health system worldwide and are ideally positioned to support patients during the deeply personal experiences encountered during psychedelic-assisted therapies. Nurses are present across the lifespan, from the first cry to the last breath, and for the many vulnerable moments in between. We welcome opportunities to collaborate and advance knowledge related to psychedelic-assisted therapies alongside our multidisciplinary colleagues with the goal of improving patients' experiences during serious illness and at the end of their lives.

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