

The Nikean Psychedelic Psychotherapy Research Centre

Vision for the Nikean Psychedelic Psychotherapy Research Centre

Psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy represents a new and exciting paradigm in the treatment of mental illness. This emerging field is poised to be one of the greatest breakthroughs in treating mental health in this generation.

Psychedelic means “mind-manifesting.” These compounds produce a non-ordinary state of consciousness that, when combined with psychotherapy, leads to lasting changes in well-being. A robust and evolving scientific evidence base for psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy suggests that this treatment is safe and effective for mental illnesses such as treatment-resistant depression, severe and chronic post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and end-of-life distress.

Canada is well-positioned to become a world leader in regulating psychedelic medicines and integrating them into health care. In 2020, the Canadian government granted patients facing palliative illnesses access to psilocybin-assisted psychotherapy to treat end-of-life distress and has indicated it will open access to psilocybin and MDMA through its Special Access Program soon.

The vision for the Nikean Psychedelic Psychotherapy Research Centre is to create an academic and innovation hub. The Centre plans to harness the potential of psychedelic medicine to provide transformative care to patients, pioneer training in psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy and conduct high-quality research that advances the field.

The Nikean Psychedelic Psychotherapy Research Centre will be housed at University Health Network (UHN), a multi-campus healthcare institution encompassing Toronto General and Western hospitals, The Princess Margaret, Toronto Rehab and The Michener Institute of Education. In 2021, UHN’s Toronto General Hospital was named the number-four hospital in the world and the number-one hospital in Canada for the third year in a row.

Within UHN, the Nikean Psychedelic Psychotherapy Research Centre will be affiliated with the Centre for Mental Health. UHN is home to Canada’s largest medical psychiatry team led by Dr. Susan Abbey, Psychiatrist-in-Chief. UHN’s Centre for Mental Health serves some of the country’s most complex patients who suffer from comorbid mental and physical illness. It is also a leader in mental health research in Canada.



Toronto General Hospital
Number 4 in the world.
Best in Canada.

Values of the Nikean Psychedelic Psychotherapy Research Centre

The following values will guide the Nikean Psychedelic Psychotherapy Research Centre:

Humanity

Our work centres on our patients, remembering that each one is a complex human being with a unique history and circumstances as well as gifts, resources and skills.

With compassion for the human condition, we seek to harness psychedelic research to reduce suffering and foster well-being.

Collaboration

The psychedelic experience involves trust and open-mindedness. In the service of healing and transformation, we aim to build trusting relationships and partnerships through reciprocity, interdisciplinary scholarship, respect for existing cultures and groups and a commitment to Open Science.

Diversity, equity and inclusion

We recognize that psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy emerges in powerful and complex sociopolitical and historical contexts. Research and clinical work are continually shaped by systemic issues, representing an opportunity to include diverse populations, identify and address historical oppression and build equity. We commit to integrating a spirit of radical inclusion into our work at all levels.

Interconnectedness

Part of the power of a psychedelic experience and its integration is the perspective it confers on patients: to see themselves as part of a dynamic and beautiful whole. We strive to honour the connections and complexities of healing, working to bridge individual healing with collective transformation. We recognize that our individual and collective healing is vital to the healing of our planet.

Aims of the Nikean Psychedelic Psychotherapy Research Centre

1. Research

The Nikean Centre will advance the scientific evidence base for psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy by conducting phase I, II and III clinical trials and other research. This work will contribute significantly to this field and establish Canada as a leader in psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy research. The Centre's proposed research projects include:

Psilocybin-Assisted Existential, Attachment and Relational (PEARL) Therapy for End-of-Life Distress in Patients with Advanced Cancer

This randomized controlled trial will examine the feasibility, efficacy and safety of a new modality of psychotherapy for people who are dying called PEARL therapy. This psychotherapy method combines elements of psilocybin-assisted psychotherapy with CALM (Managing Cancer and Living Meaningfully), a four to six-session evidence-based modality developed at The Princess Margeret, the largest cancer centre in Canada, to treat end-of-life distress.

The PEARL project team is led by Dr. Sarah Hales, Dr. Emma Hapke and Dr. Daniel Rosenbaum with the support of Dr. Madeline Li, Dr. Camilla Zimmerman, Dr. Anthony Bossis and a strong interdisciplinary team.

Psilocybin-Assisted Existential, Attachment and Relational (PEARL) Therapy for Caregivers

The Centre is planning two phase II open-label clinical trials to examine the feasibility of PEARL therapy for caregivers. The first study will examine PEARL therapy for caregivers of advanced cancer patients and the second study will investigate PEARL therapy for bereaved caregivers. These are the first pilot studies in the world to look at psilocybin-assisted psychotherapy for caregivers, an often overlooked group with high distress.

Psilocybin-Assisted Psychotherapy for Body Dysmorphic Disorder

Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD) is a severe psychiatric disorder characterized by a belief in imagined ugliness. People with BDD see parts or all of themselves as malformed or disfigured. This multi-site study, conducted with a sister site at the University of Melbourne will be the world's first randomized controlled trial of psilocybin-assisted psychotherapy for treatment-resistant BDD. This project will be a collaboration with CAMH led by Dr. David Castle.

Experiential Training in Therapists Learning Psychedelic-Assisted Psychotherapy

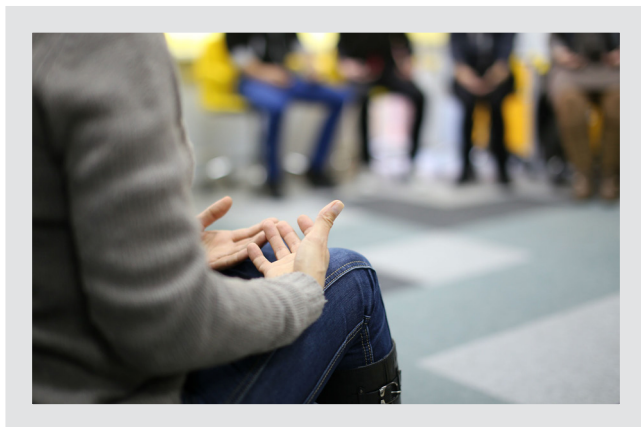
This mixed-methods, open-label pilot trial will provide interested trainees in the Centre's Certificate in Psychedelic-Assisted Psychotherapy program with a full course of psilocybin-assisted psychotherapy to examine the role of first-hand experience with psychedelics on therapist competence and confidence.

5-MeO-DMT for PTSD

The Centre's faculty is building capacity to work with 5-MeO-DMT in the future. It plans to conduct one of the first clinical trials of this molecule in combination with psychotherapy for PTSD.

Integration Project

The Centre will examine how people integrate their psychedelic experiences in the community through surveys, semi-structured interviews and focus groups. This work will lead to the development of best practice guidelines and psychotherapeutic modalities to support integration.



2. Education and training

The Nikean Centre will act as an education hub, offering a variety of programs and learning experiences to match the interests and needs of different learners. The flagship educational program will be the Certificate in Psychedelic-Assisted Psychotherapy developed in collaboration with The Michener Institute of Education at UHN and the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS), a world leader in psychedelic medicine training. Additionally, the Centre will offer fellowships, electives for medical students and residents, single-day continuing professional development workshops and public-facing events.

The Certificate in Psychedelic-Assisted Psychotherapy

will train licensed practitioners in the principles of this treatment modality to prepare them to treat patients and become leaders in this field. Through this program, the Centre will fill a gap in training and build capacity for psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy in Canada. Certificate graduates will join a growing community of practice that fosters lifelong learning.

Didactic component: Through recorded lectures, small group discussions, readings and writing assignments, participants will learn about the history, research and clinical foundations, ethics and best practices in psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy including set, setting, preparation, psychedelic sessions and integration.

Experiential component: Program participants will have the opportunity to participate in psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy such as role-plays, holotropic breathwork and psilocybin-assisted psychotherapy. This experiential learning is essential to the development of competent therapists capable of providing high-quality psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy.

Apprenticeship: Trainees will gain hands-on experience delivering psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy by working with senior therapists who will mentor them as they treat their first cases together.

3. Clinical care

Psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy

As psychedelic medicines become more accessible, the Nikean Centre will begin treating patients using the psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy model. These treatments will include, but will not be limited to:

- MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for PTSD in collaboration with the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS)
- Psilocybin-assisted psychotherapy for end-of-life distress
- Psilocybin-assisted psychotherapy for treatment-resistant depression

The Centre will also collect safety and quality improvement data to inform future clinical programming. An early priority will be to treat vulnerable populations who are underrepresented in clinical trials. These groups could include refugees and individuals who are BIPOC, LGBTQ or from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Integration support

Integration involves the vital work of incorporating the experience and insights gained in psychedelic sessions to make lasting, positive life changes. The Centre will provide access to individual and group integration support for psychedelic experiences, including challenging ones.

Support opportunity

The Nikean Psychedelic Psychotherapy Research Centre has received a transformative \$5 million donation from Nikean Foundation that will support its establishment and initial activities. An additional \$250,000 donation has been provided to build and run the Centre's educational program. However, additional philanthropy is still needed to sustain the Centre long-term and fund its innovative research.

With your support, the Centre for Mental Health at UHN will become a hub for psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy treatment and research, establishing Canada as a global leader in this field.

The Nikean Psychedelic Psychotherapy Research Centre will revolutionize how Canada treats mental illness and end-of-life distress. Your contribution will support world-leading experts in psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy as they build capacity in this area, conduct rigorous and necessary research studies and treat patients using evidence-based practice.

Thank you for your consideration.

ABOUT UHN FOUNDATION

Part of University Health Network (UHN), UHN Foundation raises funds for research, education and the enhancement of patient care at Toronto General and Toronto Western hospitals, Toronto Rehab and The Michener Institute of Education at UHN. Together with our donors, we're helping UHN pursue new knowledge to build a healthier world.

TO LEARN MORE, PLEASE CONTACT:

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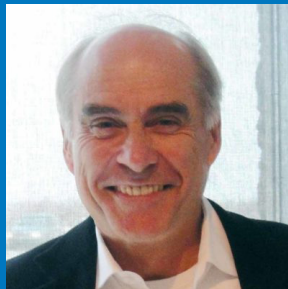


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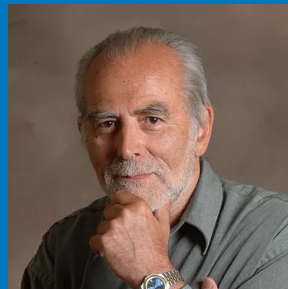
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A wider advisory council will be formed to bring together voices from a breadth of perspectives.