

## Far out: Could psychedelics fight ‘treatment-resistant’ depression?

Given existing antidepressants don’t work for many people, the excitement surrounding the development of a new class of treatments from recreational drugs such as magic mushrooms is understandable. But there are strong reasons to doubt they will have the kind of impact hoped for. Instead, we are more likely to be seeing the latest episode in a long-running saga of repeated disappointment.

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[T]he observation that recreational drugs with hallucinogenic properties seem to have an effect on depression is attracting renewed optimism. Of 12 people with “treatment-resistant” depression who were given the active ingredient of magic mushrooms – psilocybin – [five \(42 per cent\) were in remission three months later](#). Of 16 that were given ketamine, [seven \(44 per cent\) were in remission six months later](#).

While these figures are good news for the individuals involved, they are very similar to what would be expected with a placebo. The headlines hailing a “cure” for depression could prove optimistic.

Aside from the lack of supporting evidence in double-blind, placebo-controlled studies, we also don’t know how antidepressants or psychedelics-based treatments work. The hypothesis drawn up to explain antidepressants – that they address insufficient levels of neurotransmitters called monoamines – has [long lacked supporting biological evidence](#).

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [Will psychedelics for depression be just another false dawn?](#)**