

Can hallucinogenic mushrooms help dying patients face death? Synthetic psilocybin is put to the test

Sixty years after Harvard fired Timothy Leary over his experiments with psychedelic drugs, a hospital affiliated with the university has reopened the door on such research by testing whether hallucinogenic mushrooms can help dying patients face death.

The small trial by researchers at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute's Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy program is the first to test synthetic psilocybin — the active ingredient in so-called magic mushrooms — in patients in hospice care, according to experts. The patients have cancer, heart disease, and other terminal illnesses and six months or less to live.

Follow the latest news and policy debates on sustainable agriculture, biomedicine, and other 'disruptive' innovations. Subscribe to our newsletter.

[SIGN UP](#)

The pilot study, which combines a single dose of the psychedelic drug with talk therapy, began in 2022 with the approval of the Food and Drug Administration, and has so far provided psilocybin to eight patients, six of whom have since died. The trial, which is expected to be completed next year after two more patients receive doses, is gauging how well dying patients tolerate the drug and whether it eases their "psychological and existential distress."

[**This is an excerpt. Read the full article here**](#)