



OREGON PSYCHIATRIC
PHYSICIANS ASSOCIATION

OPPA Opposition Statement to Measure 109
Psilocybin, a drug not approved by the FDA, is on Oregon's ballot November 3
for treatment of mental health conditions

The Oregon Psychiatric Physicians Association (OPPA) and the American Psychiatric Association (APA) oppose Measure 109, which allows the manufacture, delivery and administration of the hallucinogenic drug psilocybin (commonly known as “magic mushrooms”) for the treatment of multiple mental health conditions by non-medical providers.

Measure 109 is unsafe and makes misleading promises to Oregonians who are struggling with mental illness. The OPPA and the APA represent over 38,000 physicians. We believe that science does not yet indicate that psilocybin is a safe medical treatment for mental health conditions.

Measure 109 would allow the use of psilocybin to treat conditions “including but not limited to addiction, depression, anxiety disorders, and end-of-life psychological distress”. Neither the safety nor effectiveness has been established according to FDA guidelines or clinical trials. The OPPA agrees with the FDA, that early limited trials have shown promise and the FDA has given “breakthrough therapy” status to psilocybin for a single condition, Major Depressive Disorder. This status does not establish the safety and efficacy of this treatment, it merely establishes the process by which to further study the treatment.

Arguably the most important stage of the FDA approval process, the Phase 3 trials, have yet to start for psilocybin. These trials involve several thousand patients that are monitored in clinics and hospitals to carefully determine effectiveness and identify side effects. These FDA guidelines with 3 phases of carefully constructed scientific trials were established in the 1900s to prevent “false and fraudulent” claims of “curative or therapeutic effects” of new medications and ensure public safety. Using majority public vote via ballot initiative to bypass professional standards of care for a new medical treatment is dangerous.

Psilocybin affects serotonin levels in the brain and induces hallucinations. It could interact adversely with prescribed medications, worsen a patient’s mental health condition, or encourage a person to stop their current treatment without medical advice. In essence, it will allow prescribing of a controlled substance with effects on the body and the brain to a practitioner with no medical training.

While Measure 109 restricts psilocybin to adults 21 and over, the effect on children and adolescents has not been studied. Legalizing this substance for such a wide variety of medical conditions, as is being proposed in Measure 109, would increase availability to Oregon minors for illicit use.

Measure 109 requires the Oregon Health Authority the unprecedented task of regulating an experimental treatment at the same time as the agency is managing the public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic and facing budget cuts. Measure 109 will pull scarce resources away from other health-related programs, to the detriment of all Oregonians, for a therapy that has not passed the scientific rigor that all new medication trials must abide by.

The American Psychiatric Association also opposes Measure 109, stating “treating patients with mental health and substance use disorders is complex, due to the fact that more than half of these patients also have an underlying physical illness. Given our limited understanding of psilocybin’s effects on patients and how it may interact with other medications, it is dangerous to allow practitioners – especially those with no medical training – to dispense a controlled substance.”

Voters should consider the science and safety of psilocybin and vote no on Measure 109.

The OPPA is a district branch of the American Psychiatric Association. OPPA serves as the organization for medical doctors (psychiatrists) in Oregon working together to ensure humane care and effective treatment for persons with mental illness and provide compassion for their families.