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WRIT159A  
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## Assignment 1

### Part1a: Psychedelics and its potential in mental illness treatment

#### Part1b: Outline of current state

##### Current state-of-the-art developments -

- Looking at Serotonin reuptake inhibitors
- Use in therapy to help patients change their way of thinking about the past and future

##### Key technical challenges -

- Risks, however are extremely rare, psychedelics can evoke lasting psychotic reactions in family members with a history of psychosis.
- Effective drug testing and applying research into actual treatments will be challenging. The tough part is the controls. It is clear if you give a participant a placebo they will know they are not receiving the psychedelic. To approach this, study designers need to focus on the non-drug aspects of the trial. For example, they need to focus on the mindset an individual has going into the study as well as the environment.
- Effective training and experience of the therapist is also a hurdle. One approach may be certification, but will take a long time.
- Recruitment will also be a struggle, because the majority of the people drawn to these studies have past experience with psychedelics.

##### Future trajectory -

- Overall goal is to see how to optimize and regulate drug experience to utilize it towards improving mental illness. They need to understand what part of guidance is critical to prevent the possible negative experiences
- One current example is the use of MDMA to treat PTSD, another is using psilocybin to treat depression and anxiety.

### Part1c: collaborations and camps

- Top researchers/developers (only some)
  - Ronald Griffiths - Johns Hopkins University
    - Mainly focuses on psilocybin
  - Robin Carhart-Harris - UCSF
    - Researches more broadly in terms of use of psychedelics and mental illness
  - Dr Frederick Barrett - Johns Hopkins
    - Looks at psilocybin's impact on brain function
- Dominant ideas
  - Looking into clinical treatments for mental illness
  - Researching how psychedelics influence brain function and mechanisms