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PSYCHEDELIC MEDICINES FOR EXISTENTIAL DISTRESS ASSOCIATED WITH LIFE-THREATENING ILLNESSES

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This presentation will review the history of scientific research into the use of psychedelic medicines for the treatment of existential distress due to life-threatening illnesses, it will then outline the current state of affairs in North America, and conclude with exploring the implications it will have on the future of palliative care.

Despite the significant advances in the field of palliative care with regards to symptom management, and pain control in particular, we have yet to devise an effective treatment strategy for individuals facing the existential distress associated with the inevitable reality of facing death. Psychedelic-assisted therapy, which involves the use of various psychoactive substances in the right set and setting to experience an altered state of consciousness, could serve as a powerful tool to alleviate the anxiety that many face after receiving a life-threatening diagnosis. ■