

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Survey on Psychedelic Therapy Curricula in Academia

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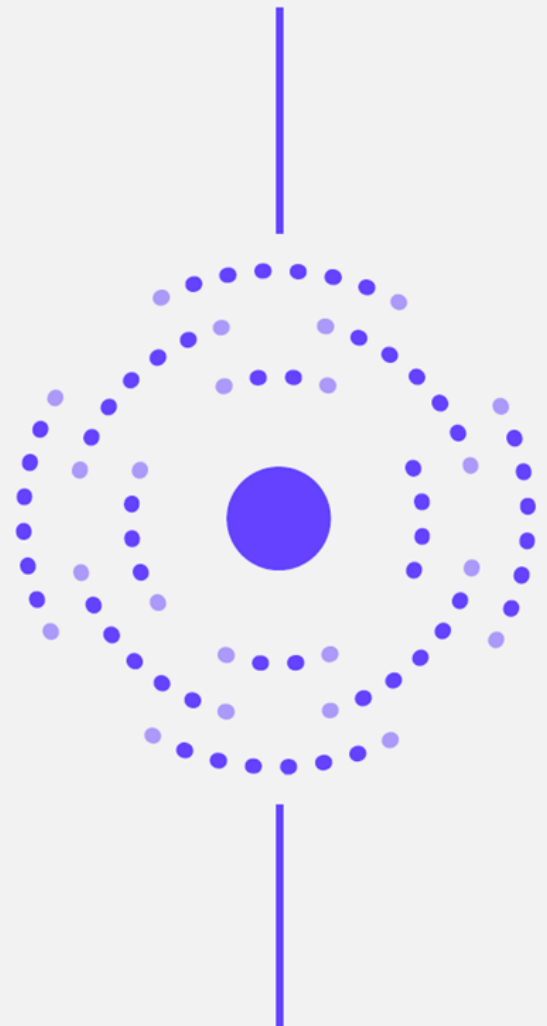
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Introduction

The Survey on Psychedelic Therapy Curricula in Academia is a pioneering research effort that examines the integration of psychedelic therapy-related curricula across postsecondary academic settings. This survey explores four key areas:

- 1) The current level of implementation of and interest in psychedelic therapy-related curricula;
- 2) The demand for open-source psychedelic therapy curricula;
- 3) Key factors associated with implementing psychedelic therapy-related curricula in various training programs; and
- 4) Individual knowledge, attitudes, and experiences related to psychedelic therapy.

In collaboration with BrainFutures, NORC at the University of Chicago developed and administered a survey to higher education faculty and administrators across a variety of academic disciplines. This executive summary highlights insights drawn from the study's full report, which examined the attitudes and experiences of a subset of 363 respondents associated with counseling/social work ($n = 124$), psychology ($n = 148$), and nursing ($n = 91$) academic programs.^{1,2} The findings summarized here detail the current landscape, emerging trends, and resources needed to prepare future professionals in the evolving field of psychedelic medicine and therapy.

Section 1: Current Landscape and Potential for Psychedelic Therapy-Related Curricula

Overall, about a quarter (26.2%) of respondents from counseling/social work, psychology, and nursing programs indicated their academic programs *have* implemented some type of psychedelic therapy-related curricula.

- By academic program, 22.6% of counseling/social work, 31.1% of psychology, and 23.1% of nursing respondents indicated their programs have incorporated psychedelic therapy into their curricula in some way.

¹ Due to a small number of survey participants representing other academic programs, the report focuses on the findings about counseling/social work, psychology, and nursing academic programs.

² Throughout the report, respondents from counseling/social work, psychology, and nursing programs may also be referred to as counseling/social work respondents, psychology respondents, and nursing respondents, respectively.

- Moreover, only 2.4% of respondents indicated their program is using open-source psychedelic therapy curriculum.

While most respondents report their programs *have not* yet implemented any form of psychedelic therapy-related curricula, these findings provide unique insights into the current academic training landscape of these fields overall and the potential to introduce or expand psychedelic therapy-related curricula within programs.

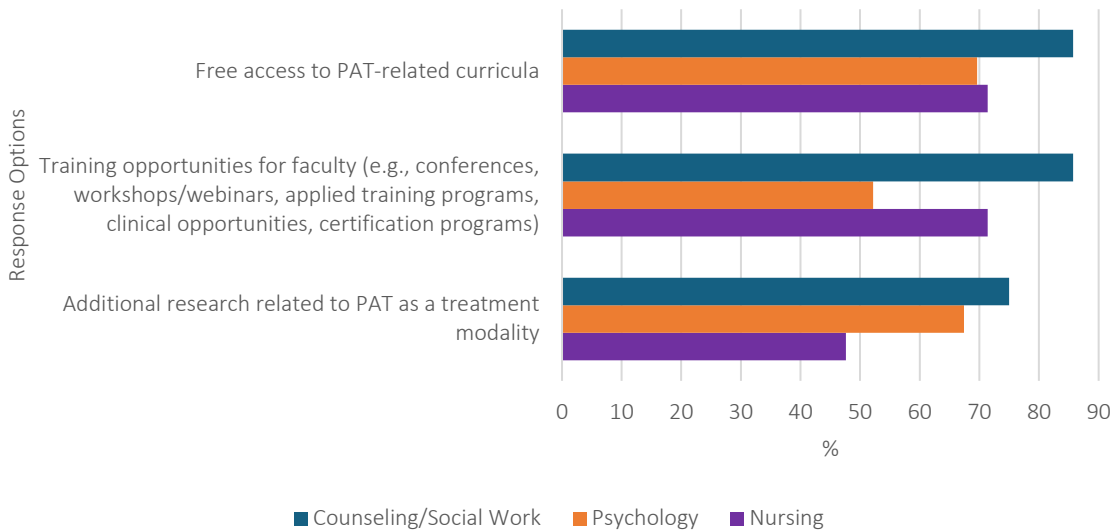
- For instance, for academic programs that *have* implemented psychedelic therapy-related curricula, more than half of respondents (60.4%) indicate their programs are currently interested in expanding or further developing their curricula in at least one way. Notably, this sentiment was widely held across counseling/social work (70.4%), psychology (52.3%), and nursing (65.0%) programs.
- This interest in pursuing psychedelic therapy-related curricula was also shared among respondents whose programs *have not* yet implemented psychedelic therapy-related curricula. Indeed, 42.2% of respondents whose programs *have not* implemented psychedelic therapy into their curricula indicate their program is currently interested in incorporating psychedelic therapy-related content in at least one way. This was particularly true for respondents in counseling/social work (52.7%) and nursing (43.8%) programs, and to a lesser extent among respondents from psychology (31.7%) programs.

Interestingly, both respondents whose programs *have* and *have not* implemented psychedelic therapy-related curricula have similar sentiments regarding factors that would be helpful in either expanding existing psychedelic therapy-related curricula or implementing such curricula for the first time. Specifically, respondents from counseling/social work, psychology, and nursing programs cite free access to psychedelic therapy-related curricula (20.6%–74.7%) and training opportunities for faculty (22.5%–66.3%) as key factors that would aid in either the expansion of their program's existing psychedelic therapy-related curricula or in their program's consideration of implementing psychedelic therapy-related curricula (see Figure 1 and 2).

Relatedly, most counseling/social work and nursing respondents whose programs *have* (51.9%, 63.2%) and *have not* (51.2%, 27.9%) implemented psychedelic therapy-related curricula indicate their programs would be *extremely likely* to expand or implement existing psychedelic therapy-related curricula if psychedelic therapy-related questions were on licensure exams.

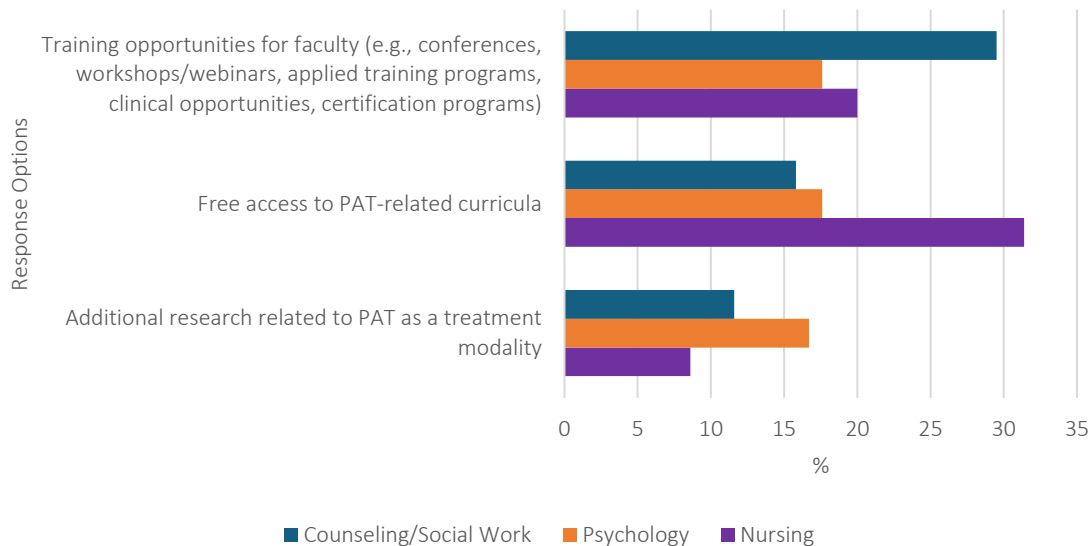
- About a quarter of psychology respondents whose programs *have* (20.0%) and *have not* (27.9%) implemented psychedelic therapy-related curricula indicate their programs would be *extremely likely* to expand or implement psychedelic therapy-related curricula if psychedelic therapy-related questions were on licensure exams.

Figure 1. Top three resources for expanding a program's existing psychedelic therapy-related curricula.



Note. Respondents could select multiple responses, so total percentages can exceed 100%. Only respondents who indicated their academic program has implemented a psychedelic therapy-related curricula received this item ($n = 95$). PAT = Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy.

Figure 2. Top three resources in considering a psychedelic therapy-related curricula for respondents' academic program.



Note. Respondents could only select one response. Only respondents who indicated their academic program has not implemented a psychedelic therapy-related curricula received this item ($n = 268$). PAT = Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy.

- Notably, over half of all respondents (58.2%) at least *somewhat agree* that their existing program curricular structure can accommodate additional or alternative curricula. However, 57.0% of respondents whose programs *have not* yet implemented psychedelic therapy-related curricula indicate that the ease or difficulty of doing so, relative to any other new curricula, would be either *about the same* (28.5%) or *somewhat difficult* (28.5%).

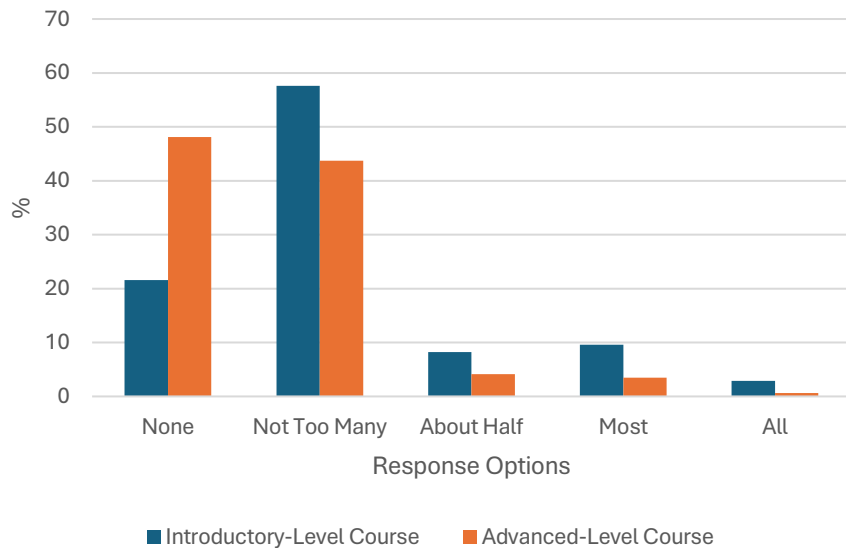
These insights provide a useful framework to aid in the development and implementation of psychedelic therapy-related curricula among academic training programs.

Section 2: Program-Specific Attitudes and Needs

The Survey on Psychedelic Therapy Curricula in Academia provides useful insights into how existing program structures, as well as firsthand psychedelic therapy-related experiences among faculty, can impact how academic programs navigate the evolving psychedelic therapy curricular landscape.

Over three-fourths of respondents indicate that either *not too many* or *none* of the faculty in their programs are capable of teaching an introductory- (79.2%) or advanced-level (91.8%) course on topics related to psychedelic therapy (see Figure 3). Academic programs that wish to implement or expand their psychedelic therapy-related curricula will likely need to hire qualified faculty to support a psychedelic therapy curriculum or their faculty will need additional training or licensure.

Figure 3. Number of faculty in respondents' program capable of teaching an introductory- or advanced-level course related to psychedelic therapy.



Note. Respondents could select multiple responses, so total percentages can exceed 100%.

Relatedly, this Survey examines whether programs have enough faculty who are capable of training students in how to administer psychedelic therapy.

- Findings indicate that counseling/social work and psychology programs have a significantly smaller proportion of faculty capable of training students in how to administer psychedelic therapy compared to nursing programs. Indeed, whereas 9.0%

of respondents from nursing programs indicate *about half* of the faculty in their program are capable of training students in how to administer psychedelic therapy, only 3.4% of respondents from counseling/social work programs indicate *about half* of their faculty are equipped with this knowledge. Lastly, only 0.7% of respondents from psychology programs indicate *about half* of their faculty are capable of training students in how to administer psychedelic therapy.

This Survey also explores the pathways in which programs may encourage program faculty to learn more about psychedelic therapy.

- Specifically, respondents overwhelmingly (70.7%) indicate that their academic programs would be willing and/or able to offer funding for training opportunities to encourage faculty to learn more about psychedelic therapy.

These findings provide insight into the current ability of faculty to teach students about psychedelic therapy or train them in how to administer psychedelic therapy. These findings also shed light on potential opportunities or resources that programs would be willing to offer faculty to encourage them to seek out additional knowledge on psychedelic therapy.

Section 3: Attitudes About Psychedelic Therapy Curricula, Psychedelic Therapy, and Psychedelics

Across the three academic fields, attitudes about who should be involved in the development of psychedelic therapy-related curricula differed.

- For instance, while 74.1% of respondents from counseling/social work programs *strongly agreed* that psychedelic therapy-related curricula should account for cultural perspectives, less than half of respondents from psychology (45.0%) and nursing (44.4%) programs *strongly agreed* with this belief.
- Regarding historical perspectives, while more than half of respondents from counseling/social work programs (52.9%) *strongly agreed* that psychedelic therapy-related curricula should take into account historical perspectives, only about a quarter of respondents from psychology programs (25.4%) and nursing programs (24.7%) *strongly agreed* with this belief.
- Lastly, while 40.7% of counseling/social work respondents *strongly agreed* that indigenous psychedelic practitioners should be involved in the development and implementation of psychedelic therapy-related curricula, only 15.3% of psychology and 20.9% of nursing respondents *strongly agreed* with this belief.

In addition to who or what should be involved in the development of psychedelic therapy-related curricula, findings also reveal insights into respondents' attitudes towards the existing literature on psychedelic therapy as well as psychedelic therapy overall.

- For example, respondents from nursing programs were significantly more likely than respondents from counseling/social work programs to believe the use of psychedelics is unsafe, even under medical supervision. It is important to note, however, that respondents from counseling/social work (79.1%), psychology (71.3%), and nursing (61.3%) programs overwhelmingly *disagreed to some extent* that the use of psychedelics is unsafe even under medical supervision (71.4%).
- Findings also reveal that respondents from psychology and nursing programs were more likely than respondents from counseling/social work programs to believe that published research on psychedelics and psychedelic therapy is biased and lacks scientific rigor. However, similar to above, counseling/social work (59.1%), psychology (46.2%), and nursing (37.3%) respondents generally *disagreed to some extent* (48.1%) or *neither agreed nor disagreed* (34.7%) with this sentiment overall.

While the aforementioned findings indicate there may be slight differences in respondents' attitudes towards or about psychedelic therapy, these findings also highlight that respondents' attitudes are not overwhelmingly negative towards psychedelic therapy.

- In fact, respondents generally *disagreed to some extent* (49.8%–82.4%) or *neither agreed nor disagreed* (11.3%–31.9%) that a) clinicians who offer psychedelic therapy have unethical practices, b) psychedelic therapy is just an excuse for people to take drugs, c) psychedelic medicine and psychedelic therapy is pseudoscience, d) psychedelic medicine and psychedelic therapy are not legitimate career paths, and e) clinicians associated with psychedelic medicine are part of the counterculture.
- Notably, findings also reveal that respondents overwhelmingly agree that the use of psychedelics shows promise in treating psychiatric disorders, with over three-fourths (79.0%) at least *somewhat agreeing* with this belief.

Section 4: Psychedelic Therapy-Related Background, Familiarity, and Experiences

Respondents were asked to provide information about their personal background, concerns, familiarity, attitudes, and experiences related to psychedelics, psychedelic therapy, and psychedelic medicine more broadly. Of note, findings reveal differences across the academic

fields regarding respondents' concerns about their career and professional reputation if they were to express an interest in psychedelic therapy or psychedelic medicine to various individuals.

- For instance, respondents from nursing programs have greater concerns than respondents from counseling/social work and psychology programs about what would happen to their career (e.g., keeping a job, finding a job, career growth) if they were to express to professional mentors an interest in psychedelic medicine or psychedelic therapy.
- Respondents from nursing programs also have greater concerns than counseling/social work respondents about what would happen to their professional reputation if they were to express a professional interest in psychedelic medicine and/or psychedelic therapy to colleagues in their field, students inside and outside of their program, students in their classes, as well as professional mentors.
- Importantly, despite the aforementioned program-level differences, respondents from counseling/social work (62.8%–70.0%), psychology (58.3%–67.3%), and nursing (48.9%–53.9%) programs are still generally *unconcerned* overall with what would happen to their career or professional reputation if they were to express an interest in psychedelic medicine and/or psychedelic therapy to the aforementioned individuals (59.4%–62.6%).

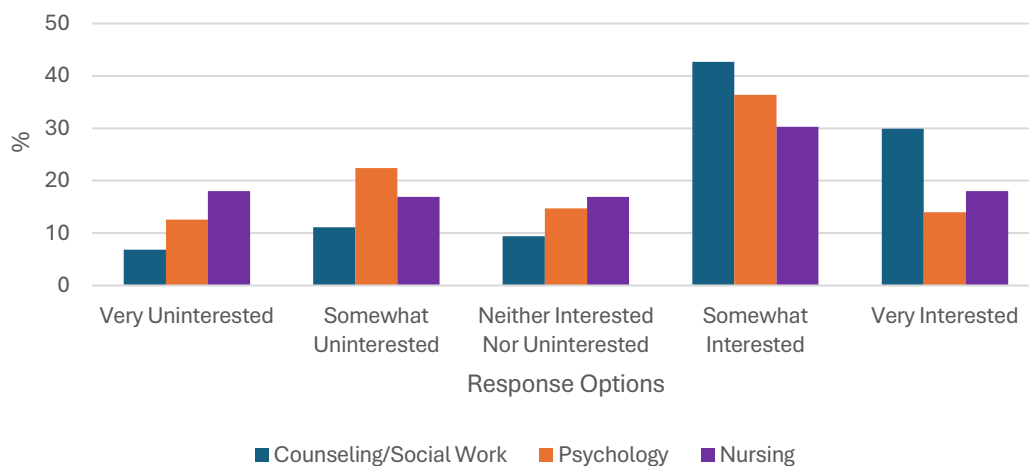
Findings also reveal respondents' perception of how knowledgeable they believe they, and others (e.g., the general public), are about the differences between the medical use of psychedelics (e.g., psychedelic therapy), the legalization of psychedelics, and the decriminalization of psychedelics.

- In particular, whereas 28.3% of counseling/social work and 21.0% of psychology respondents indicate they are at least *quite a bit* knowledgeable about the differences between the medical use of psychedelics, the legalization of psychedelics, and the decriminalization of psychedelics, only 11.1% of nursing respondents indicate they are at least *quite a bit* knowledgeable about these differences.
- Regarding the general public, respondents from counseling/social work (94.1%), psychology (93.8%), and nursing (87.2%) programs all generally believe that the general public knows either *very little* (58.7%) or *nothing at all* (33.5%) about the differences between the medical use of psychedelics, the legalization of psychedelics, and the decriminalization of psychedelics.

Finally, respondents were asked where they obtained their information on psychedelic medicine and/or psychedelic therapy, whether they are interested in learning more, as well as the sources they would use to further their knowledge of psychedelic medicine and/or psychedelic therapy.

- A majority (54.8%) of respondents indicate they have obtained information on psychedelic medicine and/or psychedelic therapy from peer-reviewed journal articles and similarly intend to rely on peer-reviewed journal articles in furthering their education (68.8%).
- Furthermore, respondents from counseling/social work programs are significantly more interested in learning more about psychedelic medicine and/or psychedelic therapy than those from psychology and nursing programs, and those in psychology and nursing programs did not differ from each other in their level of interest in learning more about psychedelic medicine and/or psychedelic therapy. Of note, nearly three-fourths of counseling/social work (72.6%), half of psychology (50.4%), and slightly less than half of nursing (48.3%) respondents indicate they are at least *somewhat interested* in learning more about psychedelic medicine and/or psychedelic therapy (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Interest in learning more about psychedelic medicine and/or psychedelic therapy.



Conclusion

The findings of this study offer important insights into the current landscape and potential of psychedelic therapy-related curricula in higher education. As mental health challenges escalate and the interest and research in psychedelic interventions grows, the need for training future providers grows. This report explores the implementation and interest in psychedelic therapy-related curricula but also the barriers, opportunities, and demand for open-source materials. These insights can be fruitful for academic stakeholders who want to ensure that future healthcare professionals are prepared for the emerging field of psychedelic medicine and therapy. These insights may help shape curriculum development, influence policy discussions, and potentially contribute to broader efforts aimed at making innovative mental health treatments accessible to those in need.

ABOUT NORC

NORC at the University of Chicago conducts research and analysis that decision makers trust. As a nonpartisan research organization and a pioneer in measuring and understanding the world, we have studied almost every aspect of the human experience and every major news event for more than eight decades. Today, we partner with government, corporate, and nonprofit clients around the world to provide the objectivity and expertise necessary to inform the critical decisions facing society.



ABOUT BrainFutures

BrainFutures is a national nonprofit dedicated to accelerating the equitable access of effective, evidence-based, neuroscientific interventions that enhance mental health and well-being. The organization provides objective research analyses, supports real-world implementation of these interventions, and develops strategies for policy change. Over the past three years, BrainFutures has focused primarily on the emerging field of psychedelics, helping key stakeholders prepare for the wide scale adoption and integration of psychedelic therapy into our healthcare system. BrainFutures has produced numerous issue briefs on psychedelics, laying the groundwork for their acceptance into mainstream healthcare.

BrainFutures Funders

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