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Navy Reveals LSD Use On Depressed Patients

By Bill Richards
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A Navy researcher used patients classified as "mentally depressed" in a series of LSD experiments conducted during the early 1950s at Bethesda Naval Hospital, a Navy spokesman said yesterday.

The experiments were conducted at the hospital to determine the potential therapeutic benefits of the hallucinogen during 1950 and 1951, the spokesman said.

He said the researcher, Dr. Charles Savage, who is now a civilian and a physician at the Loch Raven Veterans' Administration Hospital in Baltimore, could not recall the names of those who were involved in the experiments.

"Dr. Savage believes those involved were properly advised of what they were going to be administered and that the study was approved in accordance with existing regulations at that time," he said.

The spokesman said there were no Navy regulations covering the use of LSD at the time of the experiments. Savage could not be reached for comment yesterday.

The Navy experiments involved a total of 20 patients at the hospital, including 15 who were described as mentally depressed by the spokesman. He said he had no further information on the condition of the patients.

The experiments, he said, were conducted as psychiatric research and the results were published in The American Journal of Psychiatry in 1952.

No other experiments involving LSD or any other hallucinogen were conducted or funded by the Navy, the spokesman said.

The Army said recently that it tested LSD on 1,500 volunteer servicemen and civilians and used other powerful hallucinogens on thousands more volunteers. Those experiments were to develop both offensive and defensive weapons, according to some officials connected with the program.

The Air Force has also said it funded LSD experiments at five universities, some of which involved mental patients. Researchers in some of those studies have said they were also designed to develop the hallucinogen as a weapon or to counter it being used by some other military force as a weapon against the U.S.

In acknowledging its LSD tests the Navy said yesterday that at the time the drug was thought to be potentially important for the treatment of psychosis, depression and alcoholism.

"Research since then has revealed that LSD has a potentially dangerous effect on humans," he said.