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HEALTH **'80S PARTY DRUG USED AS A PTSD TREATMENT**

Study led by UCSF researcher shows MDMA could help millions with the disorder



Jonathan Lubecky was deployed to Iraq from October 2005 to October 2006. Before his MDMA-assisted therapy, the now-retired Army sergeant says, he tried to take his own life five times because of flashbacks, nightmares and other PTSD symptoms resulting from his year in Iraq.

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POLITICS

US pledges to put Russia on defensive at **UN council**

By Jim Heintz and **Ellen Knickmeyer** The Associated Press

WASHINGTON » The U.S. worked Sunday to ramp up diplomatic and financial pressure on Russia over Ukraine, promising to put Moscow on the defensive at the U.N. Security Council as lawmakers on Capitol Hill said they were nearing agreement on "the mother of all sanctions."

The American ambassador to the United Nations said the Security Council will press Russia hard in a Monday session to discuss its massing of troops near Ukraine and fears it is planning an invasion.

"Our voices are unified in calling for the Russians to explain themselves," Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield said of the U.S. and the other council members on ABC's "This Week." "We're going into the room prepared to listen to them, but we're not going to be distracted by their propaganda."

Ukraine's ambassador to the U.S., Oksana Markarova, warned that Russian President Vladimir Putin is bent on waging an "attack on democracy," not just on **RUSSIA » PAGE 3**

WEATHER

After blizzard, **East Coast** digs out under

By McKenzie Prillaman

newsroom@montereyherald.com

Retired Army Sgt. Jonathan Lubecky couldn't get the year he spent in Iraq out of his head.

Loud noises and people wearing backpacks triggered flashbacks, and he regularly woke up from nightmares in a cold sweat. He tried to take his own life five times between 2006 and 2013

Afraid that his next suicide attempt would succeed, Lubecky signed up to participate in a clinical research study investigating whether MDMA, commonly known as Molly or Ecstasy, could help tame the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.

"I thought it'd be fun to do and it might help for a month or two," said Lubecky, 45. "I was wrong. It's a f—— miracle."

is catapulting MDMA and other psychedelics into the medical spotlight as promising therapeutic tools. Long stigmatized, MDMA is proving to be effective in easing PTSD in rigorous clinical trials conducted at UC San Francisco and other respected medical centers around the globe.

Although some scientists remain skeptical, a growing number of researchers say the treatment could potentially help the more than 300 million people worldwide who suffer from the psychiatric disorder.

"MDMA allows you to access these really deep traumatic memories in a way that is not anxiety-provoking," said Jennifer Mitchell, a UCSF neuroscientist who recently led a groundbreaking study on MDMA-assisted therapy.

Developed in 1912 by the The successful treatment of pharmaceutical company Merck PTSD patients such as Lubecky as a precursor to a blood-clot-

But in the 1980s, growing recting agent, MDMA was readily available as an experimental reational use of the drug, parpsychotherapeutic tool in the ticularly at all-night rave pardecades that followed.

Psychedelic Studies, and Iraq War veteran Jonathan Lubecky take a

boat ride near the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor in November

Rick Doblin, founder of the Multidisciplinary Association for

PTSD » PAGE 4

POLITICS

Clyburn pushes his pick for Supreme Court

At Biden's lowest in 2020, Rep. Clyburn suggested he pledge to appoint the first Black woman justice. PAGE A5



CRIME

2018

Dozens of guns among stolen cargo train items

shotguns were among the items stolen by thieves who raided LA cargo trains. PAGE A2

IMMIGRATION

Asylum aspirants pin hopes on Trump policy

extended a Trump-era policy making asylum-seekers wait in Brownsville, Texas. PAGE A6

sunny sky

Bv Mark Pratt and Mike Catalini The Associated Press

BOSTON » The sun shone down on much of the East Coast on Sunday, a day after a vicious nor'easter brought blizzard conditions to many areas, and left more than 100,000 customers without power for a stretch that could last into Monday.

Winds that had gusted to more than 80 mph on Saturday died down on Sunday, and temperatures climbed into the upper teens and 20s as people emerged from their homes to dig out.

The storm dumped snow from Virginia to Maine, but Massachusetts bore the brunt of the fury, with the neighboring towns of Sharon and Stoughton getting more than 30 inches (76 centimeters) of snow.

Don't know how to make

a booster appointment? Visit Monterey County Health

https://bit.ly/3qtjYU0 for links

to schedules and registration.

Department webpage at

COVID-19

BLIZZARD » PAGE 4



Authorities say handguns and



The Biden administration



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TODAY IN HISTORY 1797 Composer Franz Schubert was born in Vienna.

1863

The First South Carolina Volunteers, an all-Black Union regiment composed of many escaped slaves, was mustered into federal service at Beaufort, South Carolina.

1865

The U.S. House of Representatives joined the Senate in passing the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution abolishing slavery, sending it to states for ratification.

1945

Pvt. Eddie Slovik, 24, became the first U.S. soldier since the Civil War to be executed for desertion as he was shot by an American firing squad in France.

1958

The United States entered the Space Age with its first successful launch of a satellite, Explorer 1, from Cape Canaveral.

1961

NASA launched Ham the Chimp aboard a Mercury-Redstone rocket from Cape Canaveral; Ham was recovered safely from the Atlantic Ocean following his 16 1/2-minute suborbital flight.

Birthdays

Composer Philip Glass is 85. Blues singermusician Charlie Musselwhite is 78. Baseball Hall of Famer Nolan Ryan is 75. Singermusician Harry Wayne Casey (KC and the Sunshine Band) is 71. Rock singer Johnny Rotten is 66.

Star report

Somerville: 'KTVU wouldn't re-sign me'

Frank Somerville's 31-year career at KTVU, where his nightly anchoring duties made him one of the Bay Area's most beloved TV news personalities, officially came to an end Friday, as his contract expired and the station opted to not bring him back. "They're not re-signing me.

So I am done at Channel 2," Somerville said in a phone interview this week with the Bay Area News Group. "I've given my heart and soul to Channel 2. I would give anything to work there. For whatever reason, they decided not to re-sign me." Somerville does not believe that his Dec. 30 arrest on suspicion of driving under the influence was a factor in the station's decision. - Martha Ross, Bay Area News Group

LOTTERY

SATURDAY'S WINNING NUMBERS

Daily 3 Afternoon: 7, 0, 2 Daily 3 Evening: 5, 4, 3 Daily 4: 8, 4, 7, 7 Fantasy 5: 1, 3, 4, 9, 26 DAILY DERBY 1st: 1, Gold Rush 2nd: 11, Moneybags 3rd: 5, California Classic Race time: 1:47.04

SUPER LOTTO PLUS Saturday's drawing: 9, 10, 22, 25, 34

Mega number: 27 Wednesday's estimated

jackpot: \$13 million

MEGA MILLIONS Friday's drawing:

3, 16, 25, 44, 55 Mega Number: 13

Tuesday's estimated jackpot: \$20 million

POWERBALL Saturday's drawing: 2, 15, 38, 54, 65 Powerball: 11 **Today's estimated** jackpot: \$113 million

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PTSD

FROM PAGE 1

ties, led the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration to classify it as a Schedule I controlled substance – a drug determined to have no accepted medical use and a high potential of being abused. The reclassification in 1985 immediately drove legitimate studies into the chemical's therapeutic value underground.

To prove that the drug had clear benefits, supporters established MAPS, the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, in Santa Cruz the following year. MAPS has since expanded its research into other drugs, including LSD and marijuana, and recently relocated to San Jose.

Currently, the only approved medications for PTSD are Zoloft and Paxil. But the response rates of PTSD patients to the two widely prescribed antidepressants rarely exceed 60%, and less than 20-30% of patients become free of the diagnosis, according to a 2008 review of studies evaluating the effectiveness of the two drugs in treating PTSD.

The psychiatric disorder, however, may have met its match. In 2017, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration granted "breakthrough" status to MDMA-assisted therapy as a PTSD treatment. The new status fosters a speedier FDA review process because it joins a class of drugs that the agency has determined "demonstrate substantial improvement over available therapy."

On Nov. 22, 2014, eight years to the day after Lubecky returned from Iraq, he entered a therapy room as part of a clinical trial at the Medical University of South Carolina.

For years, Lubecky, who lives in Washington, D.C., had taken a generic version of Zoloft with no success. And he was initially skeptical of MDMA's ability to relieve his symptoms. As a child, he saw his eldest brother abuse drugs, so Lubecky shunned psychedelics. He also feared that a bad experience would precipitate flashbacks and cause him to turn violent.

Despite the trepidation, he nervously swallowed a pill containing 125 milligrams of MDMA. After almost an hour, the drug kicked in.

"I felt a universal pressure all over my body," Lubecky said. "It was very much like wearing a wetsuit in warm water."



ARIC CRABB - BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

UC San Francisco neuroscientist Jennifer Mitchell recently led a groundbreaking study that showed the benefits of using the psychedelic MDMA with therapy to relieve PTSD patients of their symptoms. "MDMA allows you to access these really deep traumatic memories in a way that is not anxiety-provoking," she says.

> The study, funded by MAPS, was published last May in the prestigious journal Nature Medicine. And if the researchers can replicate that finding, the treatment could gain FDA approval as early as next year.

> "It's been a long time coming, and we've been studying PTSD as a group for many, many years," Mitchell said. "So it's nice to think that perhaps we've identified a therapeutic that actually has some relevance."

> MDMA works by reducing activity in the amygdala, the brain's fear-processing center, and increasing activity in the prefrontal cortex, according to Rick Doblin, the founder and executive director of MAPS.

> Doblin, a co-author of the Phase 3 study, said the drug allows a patient to think more logically without feeling afraid. Additionally, he said, the drug enhances connectivity between the amygdala and hippocampus, which helps patients process their traumatic memories and put them into the past.

"MDMA has a variety of effects in the brain," Doblin said. "You could say that it changes the brain in the opposite way that PTSD changes the brain.'

The drug also triggers the release of the hormones serotonin, dopamine, norepinephrine and oxytocin. Serotonin, in particular, fosters feelings of social connection, empathy and trust. In a therapy setting, this may help strengthen the patient-therapist relationship, said Dr. Boris Heifets, an anesthesiologist at the Stanford University School of Medicine who studies the effects of psychedelics in rodent models.

MDMA's effects, according stepson would have lost a fa-

The treatment could be especially helpful for veterans and those with complex trauma, such as the patients in the Phase 3 study. The therapy could also aid survivors of sexual assault, who Lubecky says make up the vast majority of research participants in MAPS studies but receive little media attention.

"Veterans have a voice to speak about PTSD in a way that others cannot," he said.

Still, the research renaissance surrounding MDMA, especially the study Mitchell led, concerns some academics and clinicians.

"I'm a bit skeptical of how they present their results and, essentially, the hype surrounding MDMAassisted therapy," said Joar Øveraas Halvorsen, a clinical psychologist at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim, Norway.

Halvorsen and some of his colleagues argue that MDMA-assisted therapy hasn't been compared to existing PTSD treatments or tested in enough people to adequately measure the drug's potential adverse effects, including cardiac anomalies, abuse potential and increased suicidal thoughts. The Norwegian scientists also contend that the therapy may be working simply because the sessions are so much longer than traditional sessions.

MDMA research, meanwhile, is expanding beyond its effects on PTSD sufferers. Scientists are also investigating its therapeutic value for eating disorders, alcohol abuse, social anxiety in adults on the autism spectrum, anxiety associated with life-threatening illnesses and other hard-totreat disorders.

Regarding fears that PTSD sufferers would abuse the drug, Lubecky said that having completed the MDMA-assisted treatment he would never turn to MDMA for a fun night out.

"It wasn't a fun experience - it was a lot of very, very difficult and hard work," he said. "I went through all the worst things I've ever experienced in my entire life.'

Today, Lubecky said, he loves his work as a political strategist and a MAPS veterans liaison. He also provides pro bono advice to veterans with PTSD who are seeking help.

Without MDMA-assisted The setting also influences therapy, he said, his teenage

like, "How was the weather?" As the session progressed, the therapists asked harder questions, focusing on the details and emotions that accompanied his traumatic ex-

periences. He cycled between chatting with the therapists and listening to soothing music for the next six and a half hours, breaking only for a booster dose of 68 milligrams of MDMA two hours into the session.

Before enrolling in the clinical trial, Lubecky said, his previous 50-minute therapy sessions were too short to delve into meaningful topics - and he would become either too upset to talk or block out the emotions completely.

In contrast, he added, MDMA stabilized his emotions and helped him to trust his therapists. "My body didn't go haywire when I was talking about these things," he said.

He repeated the MDMAassisted therapy session twice in the following winter and spring, accompanied by ongoing traditional therapy. After completing the clinical trial, Lubecky's suicidal thoughts, depression, panic attacks and inability to trust people gradually dissipated. And he's been resilient in the

years since. UCSF's Mitchell is now building on the success of the Phase 2 study that Lubecky and 25 other patients participated in. She recently led a Phase 3 trial that involved 90 patients at 15 research sites in the U.S., Canada and Israel. It's the first psychedelicassisted therapy to make it this far in the FDA's regulatory pipeline.

Mitchell and her colleagues found that after two months of treatment, 67% of those who received MDMA to Heifets. If taken at a rave, with therapy were no longer for example, "it's almost not that received the therapy

ing with simple questions and a placebo.

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Two therapists then guided him in conversation about his time in Iraq, start-

> Nassau County officials said cording to video posted on two men aged 53 and 75 died in the town of Syosset while shoveling snow.

> Massachusetts Lt. Gov. ter on Nantucket and waves Karyn Polito said at a news conference that officials were not aware of any storm-related fatalities in the state.

In and around New York City, snow totals ranged from a few inches north and west of the city to more than 2 feet (61 centimeters) in Islip on Long Island, according to the National Weather Service. Warren, Rhode Island got more than 2 feet (61 centimeters), and Norwich, Connecticut finished with 22 inches (56 centimeters). Some areas of Maine and New Hampshire also received more than a foot.

Winds gusted as high as 83 mph (134 kph) on Cape Cod. Coastal towns flooded, with wind and waves battering Weymouth, south of Boston, flooding streets with a



slurry of frigid water, ac-

social media. Other videos

showed a street underwa-

crashing against the win-

dows of a building in Plym-

A Rhode Island couple got

married as planned Saturday during the blizzard, ac-

cording to broadcast reports.

Sally Faulkner and Adam

Irujo had been planning a

wedding for 14 months, so

they went through with the

nuptials on the steps of the

Providence Public Library

in front of a few family and

closely for new snowfall re-

cords, especially in Boston.

The Boston area's modern

snowfall record for a winter

storm is 27.6 inches (70 cen-

The city tied its record for

timeters), set in 2003.

Forecasters watched

outh.

friends.

1-31

ther. "I have a great life," Lubecky said. "I wouldn't even be alive right now if it weren't for this.'

> (60 centimeters), the National Weather Service said.

Like most major winter storms in New England, it drew comparisons to the infamous Blizzard of '78, which paralyzed the region for days.

"I was around for the Blizzard of '78, and this one was worse. The wind was tremendous," Joe Brescia, 72, said Sunday, tears streaming down his face from the bitter cold as he shoveled his sidewalk in Warwick, Rhode Island.

Bao Ha, 26, got a shock when he went outside Sunday morning.

"It's funny, it didn't look so bad when I looked out the window this morning," he said as he shoveled the sidewalk in front of his home in Waltham outside Boston, which according to the National Weather Service, got biggest single-day snowfall 16 inches of snow. "But it's on Saturday, with 23.6 inches light, so it's easy to shovel."

AXYDLBAAXR is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

CRYPTOQUOTE

G	MT	PG	WV	J	ZJ	0	GEV	V I	AQ	XX	C
D	V	GM	ΤV	G	R	IR	Τ ;	G	MV	ZG	j
G	ΕV	W	N M	VZ	G	X I	Z J	0	G E	V 1	[
A	QX	X	ΡE	RA		G E	V W	PV	X F	VF	>
N	MV	ZG.		VW	VV	MPI	RJ				

Saturday's Cryptoquote: MIDDLE AGE IS WHEN YOU'VE MET SO MANY PEOPLE THAT EVERY NEW PERSON YOU MEET REMINDS YOU OF SOMEONE ELSE. — OGDEN NASH



Blizzard

FROM PAGE 1

More than 100,000 lost power at the height of the storm, mostly in Massachusetts. That had dropped to about 35,000 by Sunday afternoon, mostly on hard-hit Cape Cod. No other states reported widespread outages. Utility Eversource said

Sunday it had 1,700 crews

working to restore electric-

ity in Massachusetts, and

customers will have their

power back on "by the end of

the day Monday, with most

land reported three storm-

related deaths. Suffolk

County police said an el-

derly man fell into a swim-

ming pool while shoveling

snow in Southhold and was

pronounced dead after re-

Authorities on Long Is-

before then."