

Letter To The Editor

We have read with interest the recent establishment of Ethical Guidelines 2 Ketamine Clinicians by Dr. Raquel Ben and the related commentary by Dr. Wesley Ryan. We want to offer our experience as anesthesiologists also practicing psychedelic medicine.

Let us start by agreeing wholeheartedly with Drs. Bennett and Ryan in their positions that the practice of psychedelic medicine requires a multidisciplinary approach. That approach should incorporate principles from medicine, psychology, philosophy, spirituality, and neuroscience. We established the Satori Ketamine Clinic in 2019. Our city, St. George, is a small town in Southern Utah that did not have a ketamine clinic or even the availability of electroconvulsive therapy. We started the clinic based on the request of several patients who had treatment-resistant depression and after consultation with local psychiatrists who were not familiar with the therapy.

From day one, our motto has been to provide ‘meaningful ketamine therapy.’ We had seen unscrupulous ketamine providers in Northern Utah, and we did not want to replicate the environment they had created—such as lack of integration, predatory advertising, and unsupervised treatments. With limited resources for psychedelic medicine training, we embarked on a journey of education to provide a comprehensive, integrated ketamine treatment program.

4 We acknowledge that our anesthesiology training lacked the adequate psychotherapy training required to provide comprehensive psychedelic therapy, however, most other specialties including

psychiatry and psychology training programs also provide limited exposure to training on psychedelic therapy. Anesthesiologists are adept at manipulating non-ordinary states of consciousness, guiding patients through difficult times, and are familiar with traditional psychedelic medications such as Ketamine. As more knowledge is gained about the utility of the mystical experience, the art of real-time medication administration with multiple compounds will prove useful. The integration of diverse fields of medicine and psychology will likely result in synergistic outcomes as psychedelic therapy becomes more mainstream.

The most rewarding discoveries of psychedelic practice have been the relationships we've developed with psychiatrists and psychotherapists. Through these relationships, we have been able to offer integration services to provide long-lasting and meaningful transformative changes in patients' lives.

Our philosophy is that each ketamine session should be a sacred experience. At our clinic, a physician or licensed mid-level provider (nurse practitioner, physician assistant, or certified registered nurse anesthetist) administers the medicine and sits with the patient during the ketamine session. At no time are patients left alone and psychological support is provided before, during, and after each ketamine treatment. We consider it unethical to leave patients alone in a room during ketamine treatment and feel strongly that the practice of leaving multiple patients unattended should be discouraged. A financial reward should never be pursued at the expense of any patient's physical or psychological safety.

Letter To The Editor

We also agree with the concept of providing therapy for patients who cannot afford regular fees. We have partnered with the local Doctor's Volunteer Clinic to provide steeply discounted therapy for selected patients as our way of giving back to the community. We hope this practice can be followed at other ketamine clinics and/or programs to assist the underserved populations can be created.

We look forward to the establishment of consensus guidelines regarding home ketamine use. While useful in limited settings, we've had patients present with ketamine use disorder and interstitial cystitis. In our practice, we prescribe ketamine only for use in a therapist's presence, as part of ketamine-assisted psychotherapy, or medically delivered during a session in the office.

In sum, the establishment of ethical guidelines and training programs is a welcome addition to the psychedelic therapy world. We are excited and humbled to play a small role in this transformative field.

Sincerely,

Scott Allen, MD
Rachel Allen, MD
St. George, Utah

