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Vermont Primary Care Provider Knowledge and Attitudes Regarding Psychedelics

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INTRODUCTION

- Psychedelic (“mind-manifesting”) compounds have been used by Indigenous communities for millennia
- **1940s:** Psychedelic research onset
- **1960s:** Increased use in the Counterculture Movement, subsequent criminalization in the War on Drugs
- **1971:** FDA Schedule I status restricts scientific study
- **2000s:** Increased interest in psychedelics in academia, industry, and the law, both for treatment of health conditions and for spiritual exploration ^{1,2}
- **2020s:** States and cities enact laws to enable access to psychedelics

GOAL: Assess knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs regarding psychedelics amongst Vermont Primary Care Providers

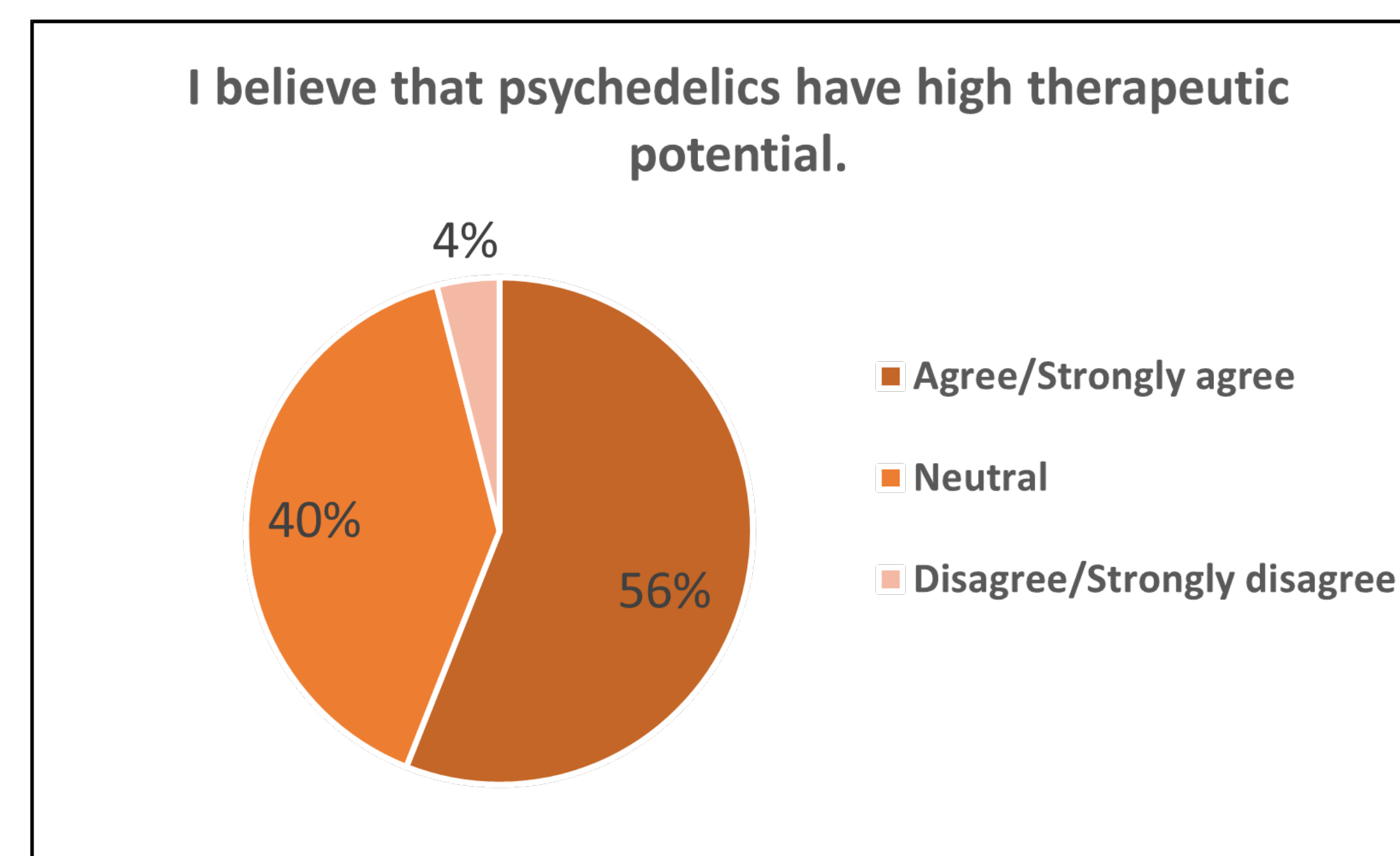
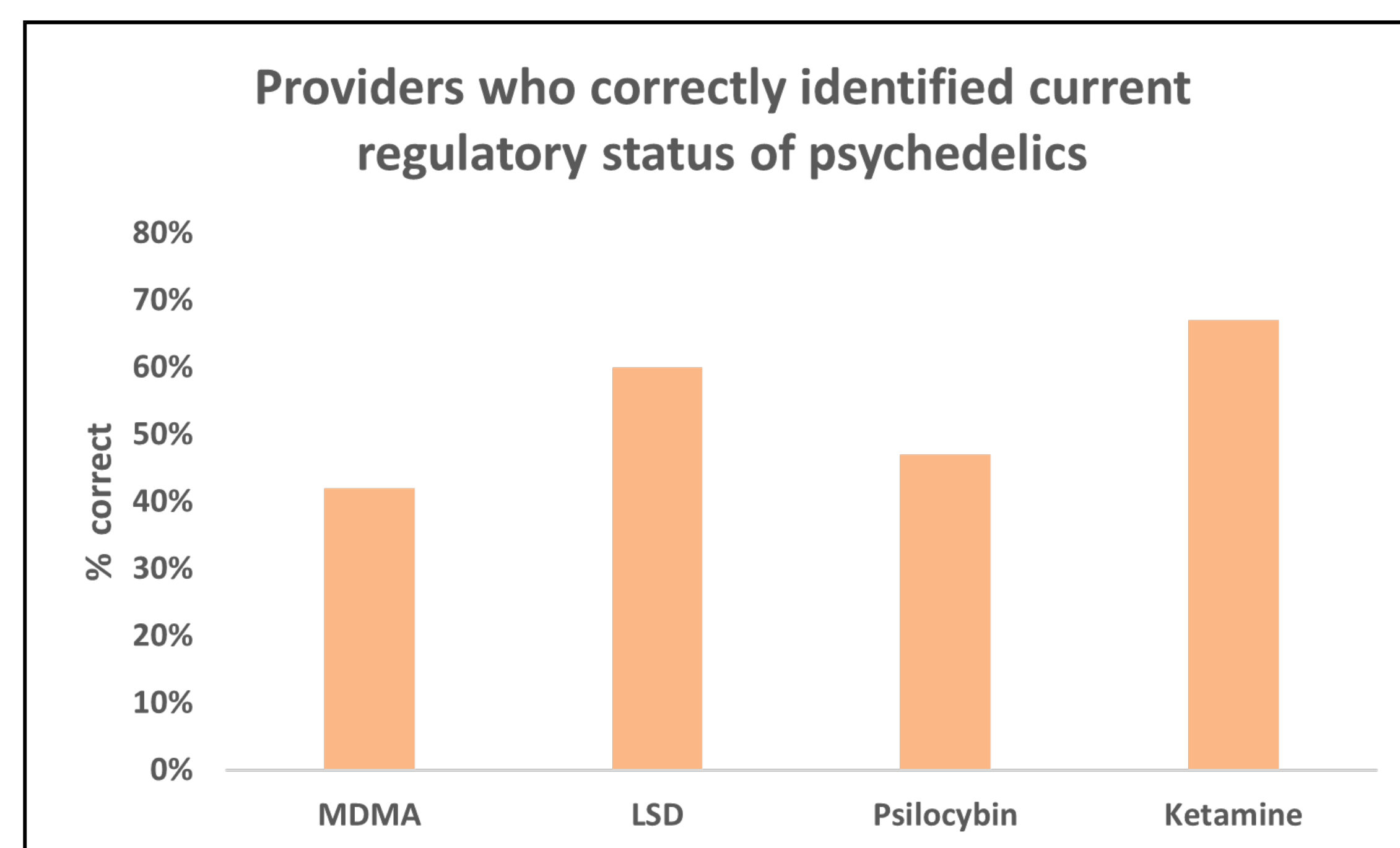
METHODS

- We developed a survey with 25 Likert scale items and 2 open-ended questions.
- The survey design was informed by a series of qualitative interviews from a previous study.
- The survey was distributed to all primary care providers practicing in Vermont.
- Survey data were analyzed utilizing descriptive statistics.
- Free text responses were reviewed and thematically organized.

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RESULTS

KNOWLEDGE & BELIEFS



CONCERNS

Percent of respondents who were moderately/very concerned about...

Youth use

71%

Road safety

61%

Psychedelics being deleterious to one’s health

17%

EDUCATION & RESEARCH

77%

Interested in receiving education regarding psychedelics

64%

Agree/strongly agree that research on the risks/benefits of psychedelic substances should be a high priority

DEMOGRAPHICS

- The response rate was 132/768 (17%).
- Respondents had a median age of 48 years (range 28-77) and 70% identified as women.
- Professional role was 61% MD/DO, 33% APRN/PA, and 6% ND; 66% practiced Family Medicine

Evidence for therapeutic effect		
Substance (Street Name)	Evidence	Strength
Dissociative mechanism		
Ketamine (Special K)	Refractory depression	++
MDMA (Ecstasy)	PTSD	+++
Hallucinogenic mechanism		
Psilocybin (Magic Mushrooms)	Anxiety	+++
LSD (Acid)	Addiction/Alcoholism	++
Ayahuasca	Anxiety	+

DISCUSSION

- Vermont primary care providers have knowledge gaps regarding the trajectory of psychedelic substances, and most are interested in further education.
- Although providers have specific concerns about safety, there is optimism that these substances have therapeutic potential.
- Research on the benefits and risks was rated as a high priority, with public health concerns outweighing addiction risk, tolerability, and administration.
- Given the rapidly changing landscape and sweeping legislative changes, bridging the gap between the state of policy and clinician familiarity demands increased educational opportunities.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Legislation has been proposed in Vermont
- Research on potential effect in pediatric populations
- Further research on clinical populations
- Next steps:
 - Provider education (Vermont Academic Detailing, UVM Project ECHO)

LIMITATIONS

- Selection bias – Survey participants were more likely to be informed
- Sample size

REFERENCES

1. Davis, A. K., et al. (2022). "Attitudes and Beliefs about the Therapeutic Use of Psychedelic Drugs among Psychologists in the United States." *J Psychoactive Drugs* 54(4): 309-318.
2. Goldberg, S. B., et al. (2020). "The experimental effects of psilocybin on symptoms of anxiety and depression: A meta-analysis." *Psychiatry Res* 284: 112749.