



Dr Ben Sessa

MBBS, BSC, MRCPSYCH
CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER –
AWAKN LIFE SCIENCES

Dr Ben Sessa is Chief Medical Officer at Awakn Life Sciences, a biotechnology company, researching, developing, and commercializing therapeutics to treat addiction with a near-term focus on Alcohol Use Disorder.

As a consultant child and adolescent psychiatrist, Dr Sessa has worked with young people and adults in the field of addictions and trauma-related psychiatry for over 20 years. He has a particular interest in the developmental trajectory from child maltreatment to adult mental health disorders, including adult addictions.

Dr Sessa's joint interests in psychotherapy, pharmacology and trauma have led him towards researching the subject of drug-assisted psychotherapy using psychedelic adjuncts.

Over the last 15 years, Dr Sessa has been part of many ground-breaking scientific and clinical studies administering psychedelic compounds to augment psychotherapy. He has recently completed research with Imperial College London exploring the world's first MDMA-assisted therapy trial for the treatment of Alcohol Use Disorder and continues to carry out research in this area. Dr Sessa is also an experienced medical cannabis prescriber. Dr Sessa is widely published in the academic and popular press in respect of the field of medical psychedelics. He has written several academic books, notably *The Psychedelic Renaissance* (2012/2017).

Dr Sessa is a trained MDMA and psilocybin therapist and has delivered keynote talks at international conferences in the psychedelic community for 15+ years.

Relevant publications

- Sessa, B., Higbed, L., O'Brien, S., *et al* (2021) **First Study of Safety and Tolerability of MDMA- Assisted Psychotherapy in Patients with Alcohol Use Disorder.** *Journal of Psychopharmacology.* February 2021. doi:10.1177/0269881121991792
- Sessa, B., Higbed, L., O'Brien, S., Nutt, DJ *et al* (2020) **How well are Patients doing Post-Alcohol Detox in Bristol? Results from the Outcomes Study.** *J Alcohol Drug Depend Subst Abus* 2020, 6: 021
- Gittens, R. & Sessa, B. (2020) **Can Prescribed Medical Cannabis Use Reduce the Use of Other More Harmful Drugs?"** for publication in the *Drug Science, Policy and Law.* <https://doi.org/10.1177/2050324519900067>
- James, E., Robertshaw, T, Hoskins, M. & Sessa, B. (2020) **[Psilocybin occasioned mystical-type experiences.](#)** *Human Psychopharmacol Clin Exp.* 2020;e2742.
- Sessa, B. (2019) **Therapeutic Applications for 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine.** Chapter 3 in *Psychedelic Medicine – Volume 3.* Winkelman, M. and Sessa, B. (Editors). ABC / Clio Publishers, New York, USA.
- Sessa, B., Higbed, L., and Nutt, DJ. (2019) **A Review of 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA)- Assisted Psychotherapy.** *Frontiers Psychiatry* 10:138. doi: 10.3389/fpsy.2019.00138

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- Sessa, B., Sakal, C.M., O'Brien, S. & Nutt, D.J. (2019) **First study of safety and tolerability of MDMA- assisted psychotherapy in patients with alcohol use disorder: preliminary data on the first four participants.** [MDMA- AUD – BMJ Case Reports paper – July 2019\(1\)](#) BMJ Case Reports. 2019;12:e230109
 - Sessa, B. (2017) **Why MDMA Therapy for Alcohol Use Disorder and Why Now?** *Neuropharmacology* (2017) <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuropharm.2017.11.004/>
 - Sessa, B. (2017) **Why Psychiatry Needs MDMA: A Child Psychiatrist's Perspective.** *Neurotherapeutics*. 13(3): 741-749
 - Sessa, B. (2017) **History of Psychedelics in Medicine.** Chapter in the Handbook of Psychoactive Substances. Edited by Maximilian von Heydon, Henrik Jungaberle and Tomislav Majić. July 2017
 - Sessa, B. (2016) **MDMA and PTSD treatment: "PTSD: From novel pathophysiology to innovative therapeutics".** *Neurosci Lett*. 2016 Jul 6. pii: S0304-3940(16)30490-6. doi: 10.1016/j.neulet.2016.07.004.
 - Sessa, B. and Johnson, M. (2015) **Is There a Role for Psychedelics in the Treatment of Drug Dependency?** *British Journal of Psychiatry*, January 2015.
 - Sessa, B. and Nutt, DJ (2015) **Making a Medicine Out of MDMA.** *British Journal of Psychiatry*. 2015 Jan;206(1):4-6.