

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2026

Remarks on Signing the Executive Order on Accelerating Medical Treatments for Serious Mental Illness and an Exchange With Reporters

April 18, 2026

The President. Hello, everybody. This is a little bit unusual, right?

Q. Yes, it is.

The President. Bobby's a very unusual person. I said, "When is the news conference?" He said, "Saturday morning." I said, "I don't know, has that ever happened before?"

Well, it's an honor, and it's very important, what we're doing.

So, as you see—and you know a lot of the people behind me. They're tremendous professionals—medical professionals, most, and some military, like Marcus—some great military professionals too. Real hero.

Today I'm pleased to announce historic reforms to dramatically accelerate access to new medical research and treatments based on psychedelic drugs.

In many cases, these experimental treatments have shown life-changing potential for those suffering from severe mental illness and depression, including our cherished veterans. Our veterans are having a tremendous hard time. You know, the suicide rate—we have it down a little bit, but they are having a hard time.

And I got a call from a number of people, including the great Joe Rogan. And he said, "We have to do something about this." And I looked into it. I called Bobby. I called Oz. I called Marty and Jay. And it was really—it was uniform support.

And I said: "So why would we wait 3 or 4 years to get it done? Or—10 years, frankly. Let's get it done immediately." And that's what happened. This is—probably never been anything happened so quickly. Everybody is so strongly in favor of this.

It's—for a lot of people, but it's for our military, in particular. The suicide epidemic among veterans is a national tragedy.

Since 9/11, we've lost over 21 times more veteran lives to suicide than on the battlefield. So, we lose—think of that—21 times more. And today we're bringing them new hope. I think you're going to see a big difference and a big reduction in that number.

I want to thank Secretary of Health and Human Services, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., who's a fantastic—where are you, Bobby?

Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. Over here, Mr. President.

The President. He always makes it difficult for me. [*Laughter*] Huh? Come here, Bobby. He's done a great job too, and people love him. And more importantly, your wife is here someplace, Bobby. She's out there. Where are you? Where are you?

Actor Cheryl Hines. I'm here. I'm behind the press.

The President. The real boss in the family, I have to say. [*Laughter*] She's fantastic. Thank you very much for being here.

As well as FDA Commissioner, Marty Makary; CMS Administrator, Dr. Mehmet Oz; NIH Director, Dr. Jay Bhattacharya. See how easy that name is now? *[Laughter]* You know, it used to give me little trouble. That was a tough name.

Congressman Morgan Luttrell, who's a friend of mine and a real—he's a real war hero. He knows—he knows something that a lot of us will never find out about.

Retired U.S. Navy Seal Marcus Luttrell.

The two of them—I don't know what—what was in the—what's in your blood, fellas? *[Laughter]* You guys are—you guys are——

Representative Morgan J. Luttrell. Ask our mother.

Marcus Luttrell. Mom.

The President. Good—mom and dad, right?

Marcus Luttrell. My mom and dad.

The President. Yes. Good—somebody. Good to have you.

Joe Rogan, who's—fantastic person. We did a little interview before the election. We had over 300 million people. And I said, "Oh, man, I hope Kamala doesn't do it." And she didn't. He wanted her to do it, but she didn't. Someday, Joe's going to explain why. I could tell you why. *[Laughter]*

But along with many other—*[laughter]*—because she didn't want to—with many other veterans. And I just want to thank—the people behind me are outstanding. It's an amazing group.

The Executive order I'm signing—we're actually signing the Executive order today—is really a moment. It directs the FDA to expedite their review of certain psychedelics already designated as Breakthrough Therapy drugs. They're very much being discussed. I think—that's one of the hottest things, I think, you're talking about, Oz, right?

It's nothing—if these turn out to be as good as people are saying, it's going to have a tremendous impact on this country and other countries too.

These treatments are currently in the advanced stages of clinical trials to ensure that they're both safe and effective for the American patients. And the nice part is, we're actually doing this early, but it has been going on—research has been going on for quite some time. But you know, usually with things like this, nothing ever happens, no matter how the research ends up. But we're—we're changing that.

This order will clear away unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles, improve data-sharing among the FDA and the Department of Veterans Affairs, and facilitate fast rescheduling of any psychedelic drugs that become FDA approved. And we think many of them will go very quickly.

And I have to say, the most favored nations pricing that we established, that I established, has been knocking the cost of drugs down by 50, 60, 70, 80 percent. And, Oz, I want to thank you and Bobby for the great job you've done. It's incredible.

The press refuses to write about it. I think it's—it's probably as big as what we're talking about today. The drug costs are going—are going down at—and by the way, TrumpRx, which is where you go to get your very low-cost drugs.

But when you think—in my first term, for 28 years, drug prices went up, and I got it down one-quarter or one-eighth of a percent. I was so proud of myself. I was the only one that, in 28 years, got—got them down. And I had a news conference to explain how great I was. I said, "I'm the greatest there ever was. I got it down one-eighth of a percent." *[Laughter]* Okay?

I—was very proud, because it only went up. For 28 years, it went up. Now I got it down little bit. And—now I got it down 50 percent, 60 percent, 70 percent, with these guys. So now I am—you know?

But nobody wants to write about it. But it doesn't matter, because the people have found out, and they're getting—you know, we—we're the highest—we were the highest in the world by far. Sometimes, we'd be 10 times higher than other countries. You'd buy a drug—I call it the "fat pill" or the "fat drug." You'd buy it—in London, you'd buy it for \$10 for a pill, let's say—or a pill, generally. But actually, to be specific, London, \$87; New York, \$1,300.

I said, "How can that be possible?" How can it be possible?" Eighty-seven dollars. And actually, a friend of mine called me up, and he said, "You know"—he's a very rich guy, but—and he happens to be on this Ozempic, I guess, at the time. And it had—it was not working, by the way. [Laughter] The guy was extremely—extremely successful, but highly neurotic. Had a lot of problems. I will not mention his name. He's begging me not to mention his—because he's become quite famous. He's a big factor here.

But he's very smart. Very rich guy. Very, very successful guy. And he said, "Hey, President." He used to call me "Donny." Now he calls me "President." Sign of respect.

He said, "I'm in London. I bought this stuff for 87 bucks. In New York, I pay \$1,300. What's going on?" I said: "Well, that's the way it is. We pay the highest prices in the world." And it sort of hit me that—how ridiculous it is.

Made, by the way—he checked it. He had a whole, big research done on it, because he couldn't believe it. Made in the same factory, same plant, same—everything was the same except the price. And now we are the lowest price. We are tied. In other words, whatever the lowest price in the world is, that's the price we pay. That's a tremendous difference.

So we'll be paying—they're going—they go up a little bit. So the \$87 will go, like, to \$120, and we'll go down from \$1,300 to \$120. So we'll have these massive price cuts. And they've already started.

And I think it's one of the biggest things. But unfortunately, the press doesn't like to talk about it. But—because it's a—if I were a Democrat, it would be headlines all over the place. But—so I do that. That's why I like live television, actually. It's great because you can't do any cutting.

But I was so honored by that, and that's going to have a huge impact on this also, because the pricing—not only is it important, but the pricing is going on.

And you're going to get the rescheduling done, right, please?

White House Staff Secretary William O. Scharf. Yes, sir.

Domestic Policy Council Deputy Director Heidi Overton. Yes.

The President. So we get—will you get the rescheduling done, please?

You know, they're—Joe, they're slow-walking me on rescheduling. Okay? You're going to get it done, right?

Deputy Director Overton. Yes, absolutely.

The President. In 2024 study from Stanford University, 30 special operation veterans with traumatic brain injuries underwent—it's called ibogaine treatment. Ibogaine. Remember the name.

Is that pronounced relatively properly, would you say?

Commissioner of Food and Drugs Martin A. Makary. Yes.

National Institutes of Health Director Jay Bhattacharya. Yes.

The President. I don't want to get it wrong—ibogaine—because it's so important. And experienced an 80- to 90-percent reduction in symptoms of depression and anxiety within 1 month.

Can I have some, please? I'll take—[inaudible]. [Laughter] I'll take whatever it takes. I don't have time to be depressed.

You know, if you stay busy enough, maybe that works too. That's what I do.

In Texas, Republican leaders have already committed \$50 million to the ibogaine research. And today the Federal Government is making a \$50 million research investment in its own. And so that was just approved just last night.

We're also opening a pathway for ibogaine to be administered to desperately ill patients under the "right to try" law. That's a law that I started and I got—"right to try." Very proud of that. That was done in my first term. And I—used to marvel at the fact that people that were terminally ill could not get a drug. They're terminally ill—they're going to die, and the FDA—right, Marty—

Commissioner Makary. That's right.

The President. —and Jay?

Director Bhattacharya. Yes.

The President. The FDA was protecting them from dying, but they were going to die. And so, we have these incredible drugs. And they may work, and they may not work, but we wouldn't let anybody get them because they were bad for your health. But these are people that were going to die. And it never made sense to me.

So one of the first things I did early in my term—and it was very tough to get, actually. Hard to believe. It was very tough with Congress, but they came through. The Republicans came through. And we have something called "right to try," and we've saved thousands and thousands of lives.

That's if you're terminally ill or very ill and there is a new drug that is not available because it's going through the process of the FDA—and Marty has cut that process down by 50 percent. We're down—it used to take 12 years, and now we have it down to 5 or 6 years. And it's one of the most important things that you can do.

But if you're terminally ill and there's a new drug that may work or may not work but it hasn't been approved yet, you sign a document and you're not going to hold the country liable, you're not going to hold the drug companies or the insurance companies or anybody liable, and you have the right to try.

And what it's done—and nobody wanted it. The insurance companies hated it. Even the doctors, they were all afraid of it because they didn't want to be sued. But I took all of the liability out of it. You sign a document. You're not going to sue the doctor. You're not going to sue the hospital. You're not going to sue anybody, including the country. And everybody signs it, like, immediately.

And we have—tens of thousands of people on this, and we've saved thousands and thousands of lives. And what it has done—we never thought of it so much, Oz—but what it has done is, in some cases, these drugs are working so good, it literally cures people that were

terminally ill. But it's one of the things I'm most proud—I'm proud of a lot of things we've done, but that's one of the things we're most proud of, "right to try."

But I've always believed in ensuring that the American patients have access to breakthrough treatments and therapies with love for our veterans—and I have real love for our veterans. I was with a group yesterday; it's incredible what they've gone through—and care for American patients.

Today's order will ensure that people suffering from debilitating symptoms might finally have a chance to reclaim their lives and lead a happier life. You know, just lead a happier life. They've been through so much.

So I'd like to ask Secretary Kennedy to say a few words, followed by Commissioner Makary, Marcus Luttrell, Joe Rogan, and anybody in the group that would like to speak—you're tremendous people. I know many of you, and you're really highly respected people. And the Luttrell family is well represented, but I don't mind having both Luttrells—both Luttrells can say a few words. Okay? Great people.

And so, Bobby, do you want to start it off, please?

Secretary Kennedy. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you very much.

Secretary Kennedy. Good morning, and thanks to the leadership of President Trump for making this historic day possible.

Under the Executive order, HHS will accelerate research, approval, and access to new mental health treatments, including psychedelic therapies, such as ibogaine. We're taking this decision—this decisive step to confront one of the most urgent public health challenges facing our nation: the mental health crisis.

[At this point, Secretary Kennedy continued his remarks, concluding as follows.]

I want to thank a couple of people for getting—this in record time across the finish line: Calley Means and Dr. Heidi Overton. Thank you, Heidi, for your leadership and for your attention to—detail that is often frustrating but always right. *[Laughter]* So, thank you.

And thank you, above all, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you very much, Bobby. And you're fantastic.

Bobby has really done an amazing job. You know, MAHA—it's a big deal. And I want to thank you. You really—you work so hard, Oz and everybody up here. And I just want to thank you. Great job. And it's somewhat outside of the box, would you say? And that—we need outside of the box a little bit, right? Would you say, Oz?

Marty, please.

Commissioner Makary. Great. Thank you, Mr. President.

Next week, the FDA will issue three National Priority Vouchers for serotonin 2A agonists, also known as psychedelics. Under this new program in this administration, drugs can get approved in weeks—not a year or a year-plus, but in weeks—if they are in line with our national priorities. We have 18 vouchers in the program. We'll be adding three more next week. This is an unmet public health need, and there are potentially promising treatments.

That's why there's a sense of urgency around this. That's why we're doing it now. The applications are about to come in, so this is the natural, perfect timing for this announcement.

[Commissioner Makary continued his remarks, concluding as follows.]

To be clear, the FDA will also have criteria and circumstances that have to be used to administer these drugs. These drugs can have side effects. And so the—it's not like you go to the pharmacy and pick it up. It's like medications that are administered in an ICU or an operating room. There are criteria for doing it in a controlled setting.

Finally, given the urgency of today's mental health crisis, I just want to thank you, Mr. President, and say the FDA is proud to support this broader effort to evaluate new therapeutics for some of the greatest Americans we have in this country.

The President. Thank you very much, Jay.

Commissioner Makary. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Doing a great job too. Appreciate it.

Marcus.

Mr. Luttrell. Yes, sir.

To start off, Mr. President, thank you so much for having us in here and doing this. You're going to save a lot of lives with it.

I'd like to say how grateful I am to have had the opportunity to go through the program and receive the ibogaine. It absolutely changed my life for the better. I went through a lot of the programs that the veterans are going through, and I always kind of felt like I was a victim coming out of the program.

When I came out of this, I felt like I had gotten my life back. That was 5 years ago. I literally live the best days of my life every single day. I'm so thankful for everybody who was in this room to help out with this.

I know this is kind of a new frontier for us. And just the fact that we're taking this kind of "slow is smooth; smooth is fast," and we're getting it in there so we can—we can test this out so that we—we don't get ahead of ourselves, I think that's very impactful.

I think there's a lot of people out there that need help, not only our veterans but our—our civilian population that can benefit from this. And it's going to do great things for our country to get it back on track and open up a lot of doorways and pathways for us to be successful in the future.

Thank you for your time.

The President. That's fantastic. So you've done this 5 years? You've been——

Mr. Luttrell. Yes, sir.

The President. And it's just been a whole different thing?

Mr. Luttrell. Every single day is a better day for me.

The President. Wow. That's amazing, really.

Rep. Luttrell. I can vouch for that. *[Laughter]*

The President. Come here. Look at this guy. This guy's got guts. Come here. This guy's——

Two good guys. I didn't realize you were involved in it already. That's the best testament you can have.

Mr. Luttrell. Yes, sir.

The President. There's nothing better than that.

A man who's really respected by everybody, and he is a fantastic person—Joe Rogan—to say a few words. Please, Joe.

Comedian and podcast host Joe Rogan. Well, I want to say that I'm here because of the man in my left. Bryan Hubbard and former Texas Governor Rick Perry came on my podcast. They told me how impactful this medicine is. This—and having that conversation with them—millions of people got a chance to hear their story, hear the stories of all the different people that have had life-changing experiences from it. And I want—I want Bryan to be able to speak about this.

The President. Good. Bryan, please.

Americans for Ibogaine Chief Executive Officer W. Bryan Hubbard. Thank you, sir.

The President. I heard that show. You have no trouble speaking. [Laughter] He's got no trouble speaking.

Mr. Hubbard. I want to assure you that my presence here is the most concrete affirmation that God has a wonderful sense of humor. [Laughter] Thank you. Thank you.

Federal prohibition of psychedelic medicine in America is over. On the 250th year—[applause]. On the 250th year of our Nation's founding, everyone who has fought for this day through decades of monumental struggle, sacrifice, and suffering can now declare a seminal victory for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—rights we bear as images of our eternal creator whose essence is almighty, eternal, unconditional love for each and every one of us.

This is the end of the beginning. We have moved mountains; yet there are mountains to move. Government systems which have relentlessly suppressed psychedelics are the same systems which will now manage their emergence. We dare not let our guard down for one second and be hair-trigger ready to impose accountability for incompetence, obstruction, or failure.

Credit belongs where credit is due. With this Executive order, President Trump has delivered an epic victory for all humanity. I thank him for having the courage to make this happen and my mission brother, Joe Rogan, for having the spine to make the ask.

To our brothers and sisters in Gabon, you have our deepest gratitude for your stewardship of the sacred tree grown for the healing of nations. I will do my best to deliver the respect and honor you deserve for helping heal this Nation.

It is my joy to deliver these good tidings unto the meek, which will, hopefully, bind up the brokenhearted, proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to all who are bound.

God bless you, and God bless America.

The President. Thank you, Bryan. Wow. Good job. Good job.

Mr. Rogan. I want to tell everybody how this happened. I sent President Trump some information. We have a gigantic opiate problem in this country, obviously. In 2024, more than 80,000 people died of overdoses. It's a horrible number. And there's more than 5 million people that are addicted to opiates right now in this country.

With one dose of ibogaine, more than 80 percent of people are free of that addiction. With two doses, it's more than 90 percent.

I sent him that information. The text message—came back: "Sounds great. Do you want FDA approval? Let's do it." [Laughter] It was literally that quick.

These drugs are illegal not because they're harmful. They're illegal because of the 1970 Controlled Substances Act that was passed by the Richard Nixon administration. They did it to target the civil rights movement and the antiwar movement. It's not because these drugs harm people.

And for 56 years, we've lived under those terrible conditions. We're free of that now. We're free of that now thanks to all these people that we see next to me and thanks to President Trump.

The President. [Inaudible] We all respect Joe. And he's a little bit more liberal than I am. [Laughter] But that's okay. I have a lot of friends that are liberal. But Joe is an amazing guy.

And he wrote me a little note about this, and I had it checked out. I didn't just do it. I had it checked out. I went to Bobby and Oz. I went to some of the people that work for you. Real pros. And everybody came back with the same answer.

You know, normally, they'll come back—because this happens a lot. They have a couple of them like that where they're not sure. It's like, you know, it goes two ways. This thing, everybody thought it was incredible.

And I told Bobby—I said, "Bobby, let's just do it, and get Oz involved," and it's going to get done so quickly. And you guys did a great job.

Would you like to say something, Oz?

Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Mehmet Oz. Mr. President, I want to thank Matt Zorn, who's hiding the back there, who actually, on Sunday, wrote a draft for this.

And you already thanked Heidi and Kelly, but you know, Susie Wiles makes everything run here. This was an unimaginable task: In one week, to be able to go from a series of connections and communications with Joe Rogan, through the honey badger of them all, Bobby Kennedy, who said, "We're not going to stop." We then started calling everyone down the pike.

[Administrator Oz continued his remarks, concluding as follows.]

But this is an extraordinarily exciting day, and it would have never happened if the President just would not take "no" for an answer. He went—he called on the way, Joe, to the fight on Saturday. And I think he was as determined to get this done as the—the men in the—in those rings—and women in those rings that night.

Thank you, sir.

The President. They are determined. [Inaudible]

Jay, would you say a few words, please?

Director Bhattacharya. Yes, I want to thank Professor Nolan Williams. When I was a professor at Stanford, I got to know him, and he taught me about ibogaine and all the promise that it has for treatment-resistant depression and so many other conditions. And I—it, frankly, for me—I learned a lot. He unfortunately passed away last year.

I want to thank this amazing team that—that just moved heaven and earth to get things done.

I do want to emphasize this is something that we're still studying and we have to keep studying. We have to figure out the right way to, like, make sure we administer it. That it's safe. That we don't—we don't just take it for granted we already know everything, because we don't.

And for the NIH and for ARPA-H, we are absolutely committed to making sure that we keep studying it, keep getting the best gold standard science on it.

You—you see here Nora Volkow, who's my National Institute of [on; White House correction] Drug Abuse Director, and she's been an absolute hero in—in just developing scientific—so the commitment to—for American science to focus on this. And in many ways, it's that scientific advance that's brought us to this moment.

So thank you—thank you, President Trump and everyone.

The President. But if it's good, we want to get it fully approved fast, right?

Director Bhattacharya. I mean, for the things that have great evidence, and that's what Marty is doing.

The President. Because, you know, these studies, they go on for a long time. And if it's good—I mean, I have a witness right here—these two incredible brothers. That, to me, is the study, right? [*Laughter*]

Director Bhattacharya. I mean, just—as Commissioner Makary said, there's stuff that we know, and we can tell it works. We've still got to figure out sometimes how it works or why it works. That we got to keep doing even as we move forward fast. So——

The President. But it does work?

Director Bhattacharya. Some of those—I mean, absolutely. Some of those treatments absolutely work. You see the testament here.

Rep. Luttrell. Yes, it works. It works. [*Laughter*]

The President. I'm trying to get the answer, because it either works or it doesn't. I—would think that there's been a lot of research already—indirect research—maybe the ultimate research: people that have taken it. Because I've spoken to people that have taken it. Aside from Luttrell, both of them, I've spoken to five people that had——

Author and television news contributor Robert J. O'Neill. Mr. President, it works.

The President. ——that had big problems.

Mr. O'Neill. I've done it three times. It works.

The President. Yes, please.

Mr. O'Neill. It's fixed—it fixed my demonic relationship——

The President. This is Rob O'Neill——

Mr. O'Neill. ——with——

The President. ——who's a friend of mine and a great guy.

Go ahead, Rob.

Mr. O'Neill. It fixed my demonic relationship with alcohol. It saved my life, and then it saved my wife. So every day's a blessing. It took about 3 years of—I did it three times. It's a different—different adventure every time. [*Laughter*] It's not fun. But it's——

The President. So, without it, you would have had problems?

Mr. O'Neill. I did it with—there was a Green Beret, 28-year serg major, that told me when we finished, "Make sure you tell Amber Capone," the CEO of Veterans Exploring Treatment Solutions, "that she saved my life, because I was going to kill myself next week. This was my last chance." I had a 28-year veteran tell me that. This works.

The President. Wow. Okay. Good. [*Inaudible*]

Secretary Kennedy. Mr. President.

The President. Yes.

Secretary Kennedy. Can you ask Marcus to speak about his experience?

Former U.S. Navy SEAL Marcus Capone. Thank you, Secretary.

Yes, Mr. President, what Rob O'Neill's talking about—my wife Amber Capone, is the CEO of our charity, VETS—Veterans Exploring Treatment Solutions.

We had prayed for this day to come 10 years ago when we started the charity. We've been sending veterans outside the country, Joe, that you've been talking about for years—several thousand now. And we said the mission will end once this day happens. So we believe this is a huge step in maybe that the mission goes away, and now we have affordable access right here in the U.S.

The President. Why didn't they get it done?

Mr. Capone. We're getting it done right—you're getting it done. *[Laughter]*

The President. Yes. But why—you had other Presidents looking at it, right? Why—didn't they get it done?

Mr. Rogan. I think we needed you.

Rep. Luttrell. I can answer that question. I—that's my job. I can answer that question, sir, if you mind.

The President. Go ahead, please.

Rep. Luttrell. There's a small group of us in the House that had been trying to move legislation since I showed up.

Mr. Correa, Mr. Bergman, Mr. McCaul, Mr. Crenshaw every year have tried to move legislation—that side of the room's not going to like what I have to say about this—and every year it has all fallen short. Every year it has all fallen short. And it's because of the—proverbial roadblocks that were always in the way. Okay?

The President. Right. That's right.

Rep. Luttrell. Fair assessment.

But those Members and myself were convicted never to give up, ever. And with this Executive order—I'm going to maintain composure, Mr. President. With this Executive order, you have broken down those barriers and allowed us—we—I have all the faith in the world that this will codify and remain forever.

So thank you very much for taking care of your service members and your veterans and giving the members that have been working on this for so long a chance. Thank you, sir.

The President. Well, this—when I sign this, this does solve it for the 3 year, but we'll get that—we'll get that codified very easily.

Rep. Luttrell. Absolutely. Thank you.

The President. Once we—once I sign it, we get it codified, so that will be—we'll make it—we'll make it permanent. I have no doubt it's going to be working.

Would anybody else like to say something?

These two women are so talented. Please.

National Institute on Drug Abuse Director Nora Volkow. Well, I love an Executive order that says research, research, research, because it's ultimately what guides us on to how to optimally do things. And I think that——

The President. That's right.

Director Volkow. ——this is what hopefully will start to happen. And bringing up change in a system that has been very difficult to modify because of prior experiences——

These drugs have unique characteristics that could actually—if we all investigate them, can bring us into potential applications that currently we're not thinking about.

But if we close the door to science, if we close the door to data, we'll just keep on doing the same thing again and again.

The President. Was that door closed?

Director Volkow. Hmm?

The President. Do you think the door was closed?

Director Bhattacharya. It was. It was hard to do research before.

Director Volkow. Yes. It—very, very hard.

And it's actually just by scaling as a one, it makes it very difficult——

The President. So this is a big move, then? It's going to have a——

Director Bhattacharya. It is a big move. Big, big move.

Director Volkow. It will facilitate research.

The President. Bigger than just this one thing that we're talking about?

Director Bhattacharya. Yes.

The President. That's good. That's good. I'm glad we didn't waste a Saturday morning.
[Laughter] A little unusual, huh?

Please.

Stanford University School of Medicine Vincent V.C. Woo Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and Stanford Center for Precision Mental Health Founding Director Leanne Williams. Yes. Mr. President, this is a much-needed, bold move for precision mental health for our veterans and others and accelerates access to—personalized, targeted treatments.

As you have heard, many, many veterans and others experiencing mental health disorders, they go through up to years of trial and error, trying one treatment that doesn't work, trying another and not knowing why.

My work at Stanford and with my colleagues is to develop brain-based tests that can be measured right now in our VA and other locations that help us understand why these new treatments work and who they'll be most effective for.

So, with your mandate, we are in a position to really accelerate saving lives of many more people and getting them well sooner. And I believe that, with this, the United States will be the first country in the world to treat mental health like we do cancer and like we do many other chronic mental illnesses.

Thank you.

The President. We know the world is—yes, please. I've had some phone calls. The world is actually watching this, because there a lot of countries that want to do this, and they haven't been able to. They're going to be following suit——

Dr. Williams. They'll be calling.

The President. ——very, very strongly.

Thank you very much, both. Anybody else? You guys okay? Everybody? Let's sign it, right?

You want to say something?

Former U.S. Navy SEAL Henry Berkowitz. Mr. President, thank you. This treatment saved my life as well and so many fellow veterans. It helped me get off opiates, stop using a nerve stimulator I had implanted, sleep for the first time in over 10 years.

The President. Wow.

Mr. Berkowitz. So thank you.

The President. And you have no doubt. Right?

Mr. Berkowitz. Zero.

The President. Wow. That's—to me, that's the best research of all, frankly.

Mr. Berkowitz. Absolutely.

The President. Thank you.

Okay. It's my honor.

[*The President signed the Executive order.*]

Good. That's a good one. Oh, I wanted this one to be perfect.

You see that, Joe? You think Biden can do that? He can't do that. [*Laughter*]

Do you have any questions of the folks? And I think we'll keep it on the subject pretty much. You'll have some questions on Iran; I know that. But this is such an important subject that I'd rather let this just speak for itself.

And we'll be talking about Iran later. We have very good conversations going on. It's—it's working out very well. They got a little cute, as they have been doing for 47 years, and nobody ever took them on. We took them on.

They have no navy. They have no air force. They have no leaders. They have no nothing.

Actually, their leaders are—it is regime change. You call that enforced regime change.

But we're talking to them. They wanted to close up the Strait again, you know, as they've been doing for years. And they can't blackmail us.

In fact, a lot of the ships are coming up to Texas—I don't know if you know—and Louisiana. The ships are coming up. They got used to it. Maybe they'll keep doing it. It's worked out pretty good.

But it's going, actually, along very well. And we'll see. But we'll have some information by the end of the day.

We're talking to them, and you know, we're taking a tough stand. They've killed a lot of people. A lot of our people have been killed. A lot of your fellow soldiers have been killed over the years by Iran. The roadside bomb. Soleimani. I killed Soleimani. He was——

Mr. O'Neill. Thank you for that. He was making the explosive formed penetrators. They were making them in Iran, bringing them to Iraq——

The President. Yes.

Mr. O'Neill. ——and blasting through the vehicles.

The President. Well, he was the father of the roadside bomb, essentially.

Mr. O'Neill. Mm-hmm. Yes.

The President. And he killed a lot of people.

And when you see soldiers—or others, but soldiers generally—walking around with no legs, with no arms, a face that's been smashed, that was Soleimani. That was Iran that did that.

So we have a much different view on it than other Presidents. They've gotten away with murder for 47 years. They're not getting away with it anymore.

Does anybody have any questions with the great professionals?

Please.

Experimental Therapies and Treatments

Q. So I wanted to know: Is this—could this potentially ever be available through the VA? You know, because I was talking to—[inaudible]—over here, one of your—you guys went down to Mexico together, but it's really expensive. And this is another drug that's expensive, and a lot of veterans——

The President. That's—we have the right guy. Oz, let's go.

Q. A lot of veterans need this.

The President. Boy, are you good for this question. [Laughter] They're talking about expense and availability.

Administrator Oz. So I spoke to Doug Collins. Obviously, both he and—and he, obviously, pays for the VA, and we pay for Medicare, Medicaid, Children's Health insurance—are very focused on the results that the NIH and FDA are going to offer us.

We have a mechanism of creating models, CMMI. That might be the wise way to go because we can continue to study the impact.

This is such a massive shift in how you deliver care. Imagine: Instead of taking a pill day for your depression, you go through one treatment. But you have to have a few people watching you. It's a very different world.

So we're working that through. That's why the President, who—I think this is the perfect step to get everything rolling, to deliver on the promise he made to——

The President. What's timing, would you say, on that? Before you know.

Q. Yes.

Administrator Oz. We—well, we could have a CMMI model up that we would announce by the end of this year. But I—the reason I'm not committing to that now is, I want to make sure that the FDA and NIH have time, along with the great scientists, to give us a bit more information about how to deliver care.

I'll give you one concrete example. For things like—well, ibogaine is a little different story, but you would want two people in the room during the treatment. That's true for many of these approaches.

Q. Yes.

Administrator Oz. That's a very different way of delivering medicine. And so the models that we—Abe Sutton runs that group for us, and—he's done a great job for the President. That would be, probably, the fastest way of moving forward and give the VA data so they can make wiser decisions, because Doug Collins is very focused on this.

Q. Thank you.

White House Senior Adviser Calley L. Means. There's one thing I'd add. There is nothing more expensive right now than the mental health crisis in America. Twenty-one percent of Americans have a diagnosable mental health condition.

The leading cause—excuse me, the second leading cause of death for young adults today is suicide.

The President. Wow.

Senior Adviser Means. Mr. President, antidepressants right now are the most prescribed class of medications in the country. Over 20 percent of women are on an antidepressant. These are——

The President. And is that good in terms of—do they work?

Senior Adviser Means. There's highly problematic research on the fact that over 20 percent of U.S. women are on these drugs that are prescribed for life.

We have a mental health crisis, and what——

The President. Do they work?

Q. No.

The President. Hmm?

Q. They don't. Me, I'm on a couple of them, and they totally don't. *[Laughter]*

The President. I would not have—I would not have—I would not have—*[inaudible]*.

Participant. Attagirl. Well, we'll get you down—we'll get you down to Mexico.

Q. I was talking to—*[inaudible]*. I said, "Okay, could I be next?" But no, it is definitely an issue for women in this country.

Senior Adviser Means. Look, Mr. President, what you and Secretary Kennedy unlocked is, for the first time, questioning this system that—where we spend three times more per capita than any other country in the world, and we are living 6, 7 years less. We have the highest rates of suicide——

The President. Yes.

Senior Adviser Means. ——and depression in the developed world.

The incentives of our system are not——

The President. And by the way, autism—which we're really working hard on.

Senior Adviser Means. We have——

The President. Right, Bobby?

Senior Adviser Means. We have the highest rates of pediatric—

The President. And we—and we're coming up with some pretty amazing findings.

Senior Adviser Means. And pediatric cancer—it's the highest rates in the world. We are struggling, and we're paying more than any other country. And the power of this Executive order is really representative and gives validation to the cries of MAHA moms and the votes of MAHA moms, because, for the first time, it's taking a therapy that's one time. This is a one time—one time—not a lifetime drug, that can change someone's life. And that's the power, and I think that's why the system did not want this.

The President. So the antidepressants, all that we read about it and we prescribe to our military, they're not very effective?

Participant. No.

Senior Adviser Means. It's a lifetime drug, and, I mean——

The President. Well, even if it's lifetime, but do they——

Senior Adviser Means. Look at what's happened as we've prescribed them and made one—made them one of the most-prescribed class of medications.

The President. Yes, the numbers are not great.

Senior Adviser Means. This is a——

Dr. Williams. Perhaps I could jump in from the scientific side.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. What's the timeline for those with mental health——

Mr. Rogan. Hold on. She was—she just wanted to say something.

The President. Yes. Oh, I'm sorry. Please.

Dr. Williams. I think what's really important about your order is you include—we really want to understand why these rapid-acting treatments work. We need that for every treatment in mental health illnesses.

Standard antidepressants—in research, they do work for some people, but certainly not everyone. And if we think of cancer, all other conditions—we have a test to know which treatment——

The President. Right. That's right.

Dr. Williams. ——is needed. And we don't have that for mental illness. It's guesswork. So it——

The President. This is tough. With that, it either works or it doesn't work, and you have the result.

Dr. Williams: Right.

The President. With this, you don't know.

Dr. Williams. And so, as part of this order, I think it's really important that we're able to have the investment to understand who does this work for and the test to accompany that.

So thank you for making that possible.

The President. Do you think this could be a big step above antidepressants, what we're doing?

Director Bhattacharya. Yes. Yes.

Dr. Williams. I think it can be identifying who doesn't respond to an antidepressant straight away rather than waiting for years and being able to——

The President. What percentage of people respond positively to antidepressants? How much?

Dr. Williams. Twenty to thirty percent.

The President. That's not great.

Dr. Williams. No.

The President. That's not great. Wow.

Thank you very—good question.

Timeline for Access to Alternative Therapies

Q. Mr. President, what's the timeline for those with mental health disorders, substance abuse disorders to readily take advantage of this treatment, based upon the Executive order that you're signing today?

The President. So I'd like to ask, maybe, Marty that question.

Commissioner Makary. Sure.

So, first of all, right now it's available on clinical trials. We have not had applications in house at the FDA. There was one that came in under the Biden administration. It was kicked out and not accepted. We now have three applications that are imminent, and we'll be issuing vouchers next week.

The fastest FDA approval was 42 days during the HIV epidemic. On our National Priority Voucher program under President Trump, we're getting—we are now down to that timeframe on a routine basis instead of a year.

In my opinion, we need the same level of urgency we had with HIV for PTSD and depression and anxiety and our mental health disorder—and cancer and heart disease and so many other conditions.

So you're going to see decisions out from the FDA later this summer as soon as we get the applications.

Q. Thank you.

The President. That's great. That's great.

Q. And, Mr. President——

The President. I really like—I like that answer. I really like that answer.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Go ahead.

Regulatory Barriers to Alternative Therapies

Q. And then—in regards to the timing of the Executive order. Was there not enough known about this treatment a year ago or 5 years ago or 8 years ago to sign the Executive order that you signed?

The President. So do you want to answer that question? Go ahead, please.

Senior Adviser Means. I would just add: In 2016, the lead professor at Johns Hopkins said this was the most promising therapy that he's seen in his career. And many doctors from leading institutions said that.

There's been a hold. There's been incentives against this. And it's the bravery and leadership of President Trump that's getting this done.

The President. So you're hitting artificial barriers?

Senior Adviser Means. It start—yes. It start—and this, to be clear, is starting a scientific—a fast-tracked, scientific process that's subject to FDA approval.

But there—this has been known among leading institutions from many times as a very promising therapy.

Q. So, could it not have been signed in your first term, or there just wasn't enough information known about it?

The President. Nobody told me about it, frankly. I mean——

Commissioner Makary. There was not enough information.

The President. I got—all of a sudden, I've been getting a lot of calls. I think a lot—in all fairness, I think a lot's been learned over the last few years.

Director Bhattacharya. Yes. Can—I say that—I mean, a lot has been learned over the past few years. And I think in—I—in the first term, if I was standing behind the President, I would have been much more uncomfortable than I am now thanks to the research that's been done.

I mean, still a lot more to do. It's worked for so many people. That's really a great move to—to do this. But the research is really important, because we're going to keep—improving, keep learning, and get—make sure that the—that the people get the treatment they need when they are depressed, when they are addicted, when they have PTSD.

That's—if you keep doing the research and also acknowledge the research that's been done, that's when you get good health policy.

Administrator Oz. And Secretary Kennedy's role—[laughter]—he just doesn't stop. I mean, every—every day, all day long until he gets these things done. This is not an easy—boulder to push up the hill. And Secretary Kennedy was undaunted. And he's been talking about it for a while, so he had a passion anyway. But his mentoring—that's allowed a lot of folks to move this quickly.

Senior Adviser Means. And Joe——

Director Volkow. And if I——

Senior Adviser Means. And Joe Rogan——

Director Volkow. Yes, if I can—sorry. If I can jump in rapidly, because as—I was one of those doctors that was not supportive of psychedelic therapy because I thought it was magical thinking.

But over the past 6 to 10 years, we have seen an emergence of data that we cannot ignore. These drugs have the capacity, as was mentioned before, with one single administration to change the behavior of someone towards a therapeutic effect.

In animal models, one single administration creates—recreates pathways that have been eroded because of pathology. So we have a tool that potentially could allow us to basically manipulate the ability of our own bodies to heal itself if we know how to properly use it.

And that's why research, as I—mentioned before, is opening up doors to explore what else can we do, how to optimally use it.

Rep. Luttrell. [Inaudible]—the term "psychedelics."

The President. But you're just hearing and seeing automatic research. You're hearing and seeing things now that you wouldn't have really—you wouldn't be able to have done a couple of years ago.

I mean, it just seems to me—I've been hearing about it a little bit over the last year. Over the last year. I never heard anything about it in the past. It was almost, like, taboo. [Laughter] It's not taboo anymore. Right?

Director Volkow. And there was not enough science neither. And I think that's where the evidence speaks for itself. And ultimately—that's why I say: I was one of those doctors that didn't believe in it.

The President. Yes.

Director Volkow. So we do data in order to change our perspective and to do things better.

The President. I was surprised to hear about the antidepressants. I assumed they'd be better. That's not very good.

So, Bobby, you're going to push it very hard?

Secretary Kennedy. Yes.

The President. We'll get it done?

Secretary Kennedy. We're going to get it done, Mr. President.

The President. Sounds good to me.

When these two guys—and this third with Rob too, and with you—I mean, that, to me, is research. Right? Maybe the ultimate research. Right?

Mr. O'Neill. [Inaudible]

The President. Big fans. All big fans, right?

Well, I want to thank everybody, and it's going to be——

Q. Mr. President, on Iran.

The President. ——going very fast.

[Several reporters began asking questions at once.]

Q. Iranian gunboats fired upon two vessels today. President Macron said that——

The President. Out.

Thank very much, everybody. Thank you. Thank you.

The President's Interest in Psychedelic Therapies

Q. Would you ever try it, Mr. President?

The President. I don't think so. Right now I don't need it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:08 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to, former Holly Luttrell, mother of Rep. Luttrell and Mr. Luttrell; and Vice President Kamala D. Harris. Administrator Oz referred to Department of Health and Human Services

Deputy General Counsel Matthew Zorn; White House Chief of Staff Susan Wiles; and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Deputy Administrator and Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation Director Abe Sutton. A reporter referred to President Emmanuel Macron of France. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on April 20, with a corrected transcript released on April 21.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Medical treatments for serious mental illness, acceleration efforts, signing the Executive order; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, White House.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Berkowitz, Henry; Bhattacharya, Jay; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Capone, Marcus; Harris, Kamala D.; Hubbard, W. Bryan; Kennedy, Robert F., Jr.; Luttrell, Holly; Luttrell, Marcus; Luttrell, Morgan J.; Makary, Martin A.; Means, Calley L.; O'Neill, Robert J.; Overton, Heidi; Oz, Mehmet; Rogan, Joe; Scharf, William O.; Volkow, Nora; Williams, Leanne.

Subjects: 2024 Presidential election; Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services; Domestic Policy Council; Experiment treatments and therapies; Food and Drug Administration; Iran, commercial transit through Strait of Hormuz; Iran, U.S. military operations; Medical treatments for serious mental illness, acceleration efforts; Mental health programs and services; National Institutes of Health; Prescription drug costs, reduction efforts; Research and development; Secretary of Health and Human Services; White House Senior Adviser; White House Staff Secretary.

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