Psychiatrists Defend New Street Drug for Therapy

By MILES CORWIN, Staff Writer

SAN FRANCISCO - Kathy Tanum was walking to her car following a meditation class at Menlo Park when she was abducted, taken to a wooded area, tied up, raped and then tortured for several hours. For six months after the incident she underwent intensive therapy, but she showed little progress.

She had terrible nightmares. She was terrified to leave the house. Every unexpected noise, every shadow assassinated her senses and brought back visions of the attack.

Tanum, 39, a San Francisco marriage and family counselor, was "murdered at the end of my rope." As a laundret, Tanum and other psychologists decided to try a new drug, MDMA, an experimental drug that some psychiatrists found safe and effective for traumatized patients.

"I've taken it several times and each time I felt a little less fearful," Tanum said. "The drug made me feel smoother, more flexible, and peace of mind and enabled me to handle a normal situation.

"For the first time, I was able to face the experience, go back and put together what had happened. By facing it, instead of always running from it, I was able to start healing a lot of the trauma.

Tanum's psychiatrist, Dr. Joseph Dowling, and other physicians will testify at Drug Enforcement Administration hearings in Los Angeles on June 10 and 11 in an attempt to persuade federal authorities that MDMA, a legal painkiller, could benefit and should be available for therapeutic use. The drug, which is legal, may be reviled.

Please see THERAPY, Page 16