Is Ecstasy safe, or in the same league as LSD?

By Dan Sperling
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"Ecstasy." Users say it's a safe, legal high. Some therapists say it's a valuable tool in treating psychological disorders. The government says it's just as bad as LSD.

The value of Ecstasy — officially, MDMA — will be argued next month when the federal Drug Enforcement Administration begins hearings on whether to reclassify the drug, which is now as legal as table salt. It has been available on the street for a number of years.

The administration wants to put it on its Schedule I category of illicit drugs with no known medical use. This would make further research difficult, if not impossible, say therapists.

In Los Angeles June 10-11, MDMA proponents will challenge the administration, asking to put it in a less stringent category that would permit use but permit research.

"Some therapists have been quietly using the drug with patients for a number of years. I've found it to be very safe and mild in terms of its effects and, when used as an adjunct to psychotherapy, to be very valuable," says Watertown, Mass., psychiatrist Rick Ingrasci, who has used MDMA with more than 200 patients in the past five years.

MDMA "produces a decrease in fear and anxiety, which allows a person to look inside himself, at his feelings, to develop a profound sense of well-being and self-acceptance."