Ecstasy Returns to Schedule I

After a 6-month hiatus in its legal life, the designer drug known as "ecstasy" is again back on the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) list of substances that cannot legally be used for either recreational or medical purposes, unless the Food and Drug Administration specifically grants permission for the latter. Ecstasy or MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine) has been a focus of controversy because of its increasing use among college students, recent scientific findings that the drug may damage certain nerve cells in the brain, and disagreement within the psychiatric community as to whether it has any value in psychotherapy (Science, 19 February, p. 864).

The DEA first listed ecstasy as a Schedule I hallucinogenic controlled substance—its most restrictive category—on an emergency basis in 1985, and on a permanent basis in 1986, because it determined that while the drug has a high potential for abuse, it has no currently accepted medical use and has not...