Trump's psychedelic order

The right move if done responsibly

• By ITAMAR GROTTO

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump is seen pointing while delivering remarks about health care costs and affordability from an auditorium on the White House campus in Washington, on Monday. (Jonathan Ernst/Reuters)

The executive order signed by US President Donald Trump to accelerate research, evaluation, and responsible access to innovative treatments for severe mental health conditions, including psychedelic-assisted therapies, places the field of mental healthcare at a critical crossroads.

On one hand, it offers genuine hope for millions of patients struggling with treatment-resistant depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), addiction, and other complex psychiatric conditions.

On the other hand, it raises legitimate concerns about the risks of accelerating highly sensitive medical, scientific, and regulatory processes too quickly.

Yet it is precisely within this tension that a clear conclusion emerges: this move is not only legitimate- it is necessary, provided it is done responsibly.

The current reality is unsustainable. Mental health systems worldwide are facing growing pressure, while many existing treatment options fail to provide adequate relief for a significant portion of patients.

Treatment-resistant depression, PTSD, and severe addiction are not abstract concepts; they are daily realities affecting individuals, families, and entire healthcare systems.

Within this gap, psychedelic compounds and related molecules, including ibogaine, offer a new scientific avenue worth serious exploration. Not as a shortcut, and certainly not as a miracle cure, but as a promising field that deserves rigorous scientific evaluation through the standards of modern medicine.

This point must be stated clearly: regulatory acceleration should never mean lowering safety standards. Quite the opposite. Responsible acceleration means allocating more resources, improving coordination between regulatory agencies, creating greater regulatory clarity, and reaching scientific answers faster, not bypassing them.

Even according to the administration's stated approach, the goal is not to "circumvent science," but to remove bureaucratic barriers that delay research and responsible access to potentially transformative therapies. In other words, this is not about cutting corners; it is about correcting systemic stagnation.

Of course, there are risks. The psychiatric and scientific communities are right to warn about possible psychological and physiological side effects, unregulated use, and public enthusiasm that may outpace clinical evidence. But risk alone cannot justify paralysis. It demands responsible management.

And that is precisely where the value of this order lies.

For years, the field of mental health has suffered from regulatory neglect and public stigma, leaving major areas of research underdeveloped and patients with too few effective options.

The current acceleration does not eliminate the need for safety; rather, it enables the medical community to generate knowledge more efficiently, under controlled conditions, while building advanced therapeutic and clinical infrastructures.

The use of these substances must occur under strict medical supervision, within structured clinical trials, supported by clear protocols, robust safety monitoring, appropriate patient selection, and comprehensive professional oversight. But to reach that stage, research must first be allowed to move forward.

Moreover, there is a broader strategic opportunity at play. The United States is signaling its willingness to lead the next generation of mental health treatments and revive a field where innovation has stagnated for decades.

Such a move could have implications far beyond US borders: accelerating scientific and clinical development, establishing new global standards, and encouraging other countries to reconsider how they address the ongoing mental health crisis.

Criticism of the "speed" of this initiative is understandable. But it often overlooks the fact that the status quo is also dangerous.

When effective treatments are unavailable, patients frequently turn to unregulated markets, illegal therapies, and, at times, far more destructive alternatives. Responsible regulatory acceleration may actually reduce those risks by bringing these treatments into the medical system rather than leaving them outside it.

It is important to emphasize that ibogaine and other psychedelic compounds are not "miracle drugs." They are potentially powerful and highly complex medical tools that require rigorous research, controlled manufacturing, deep scientific understanding, and comprehensive regulatory oversight.

For that very reason, the correct path is not to isolate this field from mainstream medicine, but to integrate it into it, under the frameworks of science, regulation, and accountability.

This is also why biotechnology companies operating in this space, including PsyRx, must adopt a responsible and cautious approach: transforming scientific potential into safe, precise, and accessible medical treatments without making premature promises or compromising the strict standards of pharmaceutical development.

Ultimately, the question is not whether research should be accelerated, but whether we can afford to continue delaying it.

Trump's order is not perfect. It requires oversight, transparency, responsibility, and caution. But it does one thing right: it moves the system forward.

And in a world facing a prolonged mental health crisis, that is not a luxury; it is an obligation.

Because sometimes, the real risk is not innovation. It is standing still.

The writer is a physician specializing in public health and epidemiology, former deputy director-general of Israel's Health Ministry and former head of Public Health Services. He served on the Executive Board of the World Health Organization and led major strategic initiatives within Israel's healthcare system. He is a full professor at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and author of more than 220 scientific publications. He currently serves as chairman of PsyRx, which is developing an ibogaine-based treatment for severe depression.

The innovation bridge

A new paradigm for the US-Israel alliance

• By PINCHAS (PINI) COHEN

For much of modern Jewish history, the bond between Israel and the Jewish Diaspora was defined by a monumental shared project: The founding of a new state. What truly held us together was the collective effort to recreate a Jewish home.

It was the thrill of the impossible – building cities where there was once sand, reviving an ancient tongue, and creating a strong sovereign defense for a people who had long been defenseless.

For decades, this project was a powerful bridge. It connected Jews in New York, Miami, Los Angeles, and Chicago to a small country thousands of miles away. It helped explain why Israel mattered not only to Israelis but also to Jews everywhere.

Today, we must face a new reality: A growing number of younger American Jews are coming of age further removed in time from Israel's founding story, and further away from the inherent solidarity that shaped their parents' and grandparents' worlds.

In parallel, the Israel that some of the younger generation see is sadly an Israel of war, division, political anger, hostile campuses, and a public discourse that reduces a complex geopolitical environment to banal slogans.

Some feel exhausted. Some feel distant. Some feel that the Israel they were raised to love has become harder to explain. This is not only a challenge for American Jewry. It is first and foremost a challenge for Israel.

We cannot expect the next generation to be bonded together by the echoes of the past. We must welcome them into the projects of the future.

In my recent remarks to American Jewish supporters in New York, I shared a lesson I learned from my mother. My parents were born in Mashhad, Iran, where Jews were forced to hide their identity and live as Muslim converts. They escaped to Israel in 1935, where they could finally live openly as Jews.

Throughout her life, my mother would ask me a simple but demanding question: "Your community is the most important thing. What have you done for it today?" That question shaped my understanding of Jewish responsibility. It taught me that we Jews must look after one another.

But today, that question must also be asked on another level. What is Israel doing, at this moment of tectonic regional change and global uncertainty, to renew the strategic bond with the United States?

For decades, the US-Israel relationship was built around security, shared values, and a common understanding of the threats facing the democratic world. But now the future of this partnership must be anchored in mutual interests, shared vision, and the enduring friendship between our two peoples – Israel must show America not only why it needs support but also what it can contribute.

ISRAEL BRINGS technological creativity, battlefield-tested innovation, speed, resilience, and the ability to develop effective solutions under real pressure. These are not abstract strengths. They are national capabilities forged by necessity.

In a world shaped by artificial intelligence (AI), cyber threats, energy insecurity, defense technology, and life sciences, Israel can be not only America's leading ally in the Middle East but one of its most vital partners in innovation.

The US, in turn, brings global vision, scale, infrastructure, capital, and world-leading research institutions. Together, these strengths can create something larger than either country can build alone: A technological partnership that strengthens Israel, strengthens America, and serves the democratic world.

This is the arena where the relationship with American Jewry finds new life. It is also where a deeper Jewish idea of *Tikkun Olam* – the responsibility to help repair the world – is a salient part of Israel's modern mission.

When Israel is seen not as a country in need of defense but as one helping build a safer, more prosperous, and more innovative world, we will give the next generation a valid reason to engage.

That engagement is rooted in shared purpose and excellence, not only in inherited memory. It shows that Israel is not merely a strategic ally but also a meaningful contributor to the future of the United States and the broader democratic world

This is why we are building MIND Israel's Geo-Tech Center: To place technology at the heart of Israel's national security and diplomacy, and to help create the next language of the US-Israel alliance.

We are doing that through a dedicated technology Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two countries, with a mutual governmental investment of at least $10 billion to sustain the technological superiority of the US and to position Israel as an indispensable strategic partner. We officially launched this MoU last week in DC, with the backing of senior officials from both governments.

The next bridge between Israel and American Jewry cannot be built only on memory. It must also be built on pride, purpose, and a joint vision of the future. Israel and American Jewry need each other close. But this closeness must be earned, renewed, and given meaning.

Now is the time to build that meaning together.

The writer is the chairman of MIND Israel. He is a leading Israeli businessman and philanthropist, who heads several major organizations, including Noy Fund and the Friends Association of four hospitals in Israel.

When humanity meets the sea

Surfing as a source of solace from trauma

• By OMER TULCHINSKY

TEENAGERS ARRIVE tense, angry, lonely, distrustful, and completely closed off, and then have their emotional state change through their encounter with the waves. (HaGal Sheli)

When people think of waves, they usually picture waves the height of skyscrapers rolling onto the shores of some exotic destination, with young surfers walking barefoot on golden sand. Now, add another powerful dimension to this image of ultimate freedom: trauma therapy.

I remember myself at the beginning of the journey; a 25-year-old student with a deep love for the sea, surfing, and people. Back then, I did not speak about trauma, emotional regulation, or the connection between body and mind. Yet even then, I understood that the connection between surfing and an educational therapeutic process has the power to change lives.

Only those who spend time in the waves truly see what happens to people when they encounter the sea. I've watched teenagers arrive tense, angry, lonely, distrustful, and completely closed off, and then have their emotional state change through their encounter with the waves. I realized that what happens in the water extends beyond the waves and carries over into life itself.

Today, in Israel's reality, filled with national and personal crises, this feels more relevant than ever. Since October 7, and even long before, we have been living in a country where many people are coping with deep pain stemming from bereavement, trauma, anxiety, loneliness, and often the feeling that even their own body is no longer a safe place.

In this reality, there is no single solution that fits everyone. That is precisely why I believe so strongly in therapeutic surfing as a component of recovery and rehabilitation, and why we developed a therapeutic protocol at HaGal Sheli.

Surf Therapy, as we understand it, is a complete therapeutic framework that integrates three dimensions: surfing, psychoeducation, and therapeutic group work. In my opinion, it is precisely this combination that gives it such profound potential for change.

The first component is the body. Trauma extends beyond the mind and lives in the body, appearing in breathing patterns, hypervigilance, difficulty relaxing, and an ongoing sense of threat. This is where the sea can counteract this. It constantly requires shifts between effort and release, tension and relaxation, and the search for stability within uncertainty, helping strengthen emotional regulation amongst people who have experienced trauma.

Experience alone is not enough; a person also needs to understand what they are going through. This is where psychoeducation becomes essential. One of the most important aspects of trauma work is the ability to name the experience. When a person understands what hypervigilance is, what avoidance means, why their body reacts the way it does, and why intrusive thoughts keep returning, something begins to reorganize internally. The confusion starts to ease, shame begins to lessen, and they begin to understand that they are having a human response to a severe injury. This understanding restores a sense of control and grounding within them.

Then comes the third component: the group. Trauma tends to isolate. It causes people to feel that no one can truly understand them, or that if they speak about their pain, they will be a burden to others. Within a therapeutic group, the opposite occurs. A person discovers they are not alone and that others recognize the very feelings they were ashamed of. The group acts as a space where one can speak, remain silent, break down, and grow stronger, without judgment. The group cannot erase the pain participants feel, but it can change how they carry it, allowing them to process it together.

Through this work, understanding gains a physical dimension, personal experience gains words, and the group holds both together while rebuilding a sense of capability and confidence. That is the heart of HaGal Sheli.

If at the beginning of the journey I only felt this intuitively. Today, through years of work, theory, and research, I know it to be true. At HaGal Sheli, we have developed comprehensive research that supports these insights and can serve as a foundation for others to learn, deepen their understanding, and help people through surf therapy. When practiced within a professional and carefully structured framework, surf therapy can reach people on multiple levels simultaneously and meet them where they need it most.

The writer is the co-founder and curriculum director at HaGal Sheli (My Wave).