LSD study may help with treating pathological states, researchers say

The mind-altering drug LSD could one day go from an illegal pastime to a useful tool in psychological research, scientists say.

In what is being touted as the first study to use modern brain scanning technology to test the illegal hallucinogenic substance's effects, researchers from the University of Auckland say the drug has the potential to be a useful research tool when it comes to psychological disorders.

The researchers scanned the brains of subjects that had taken the drug using cutting-edge scanning techniques, and found it produced unique changes in the workings of the mind.

"The results revealed marked changes in brain blood flow, electrical activity, and network communication patterns that correlated strongly with the drug's
hallucinatory and other consciousness-altering properties," one of the study's authors, Suresh Muthukumaraswamy said.

"LSD produces profound, sometimes life-changing experiences in microgram doses, making it a particularly powerful scientific tool."

The researchers said the results were a significant advance in research of psychedelic drug in a time when interest was growing in their therapeutic value.

The insights could be used to help model certain pathological states and potentially treat others, Dr Muthukumaraswamy said.

Researchers from Britain, New Zealand, Germany, Brazil and Canada participated in the study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.