Clinical Characterization of Kratom: Is it a Craze or Here to Stay?

Kirsten E. Smith, Ph.D., M.S.W. Stephanie Weiss, M.D., Ph.D. Translational Addiction Medicine Branch National Institute on Drug Abuse Intramural Research Program



NIH National Institute on Drug Abuse Intramural Research Program

American Society of Addiction Medicine 53rd Annual Conference #ASAMAnnual2022

Disclosure Information

Focus Session: Clinical Characterization of Kratom: Is it a Craze or Here to Stay? April 2, 2022

Presenter 1: Kirsten E. Smith, Ph.D., M.S.W.Commercial Interests: No Disclosures

Presenter 2: Stephanie Weiss, M.D., Ph.D.Commercial Interests: No Disclosures



Learning Objectives

Describe historical & current uses of kratom, including recent epidemiological data on kratom use in US.

List clinical characteristics of kratom use, intoxication, use disorder, and possible interventions for each.

Identify clinically relevant pharmacodynamic effects and pharmacokinetic interactions of the kratom alkaloid, mitragynine.



What is Kratom?









ASA

























ASAM



















The American Journal on Addictions, 16:352–356, 2007 Copyright © American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry ISSN: 1055-0496 print / 1521-0391 online DOI: 10.1080/10550490701525368

Self-Treatment of Opioid Withdrawal with a Dietary Supplement, Kratom

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¹Division of Medical Toxicology, Department of Emergency Medicine, University of Massachusetts Medical School, Worcester, Massachusetts ²Tufts-New England Medical Center, Boston, Massachusetts ³National Institute on Drug Abuse, Rockville, Maryland

ADDICTION



Self-treatment of opioid withdrawal using kratom (*Mitragynia* speciosa korth)

Edward W. Boyer 🔀, Kavita M. Babu, Jessica E. Adkins, Christopher R. McCurdy, John H. Halpern



Journal of Psychoactive Drugs, 47 (5), 360–367, 201. Copyright © Taylor & Francis Group, LLC ISSN: 0279-1072 print/2159-9777 online DOI: 10.1080/02791072.2015.1096434

Experiences of Kratom Users: A Qualitative Analysis

Marc T. Swogger, Ph.D.^a; Elaine Hart, M.S.^b; Fire Erowid, B.A.^c; Earth Erowid, B.A.^c; Nicole Trabold, Ph.D.^d; Kaila Yee, B.A.^b; Kimberly A. Parkhurst, B.A.^b; Brittany M. Priddy, B.S.^b & Zach Walsh, Ph.D.^e



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Drug and Alcohol Dependence

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/drugalcdep

Full length article

Patterns of Kratom use and health impact in the US—Results from an online survey

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Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Drug and Alcohol Dependence

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/drugalcdep

Full length article

Prevalence and motivations for kratom use in a sample of substance users enrolled in a residential treatment program



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Kent School of Social Work, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY 40292, United States



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How many people are using kratom in the

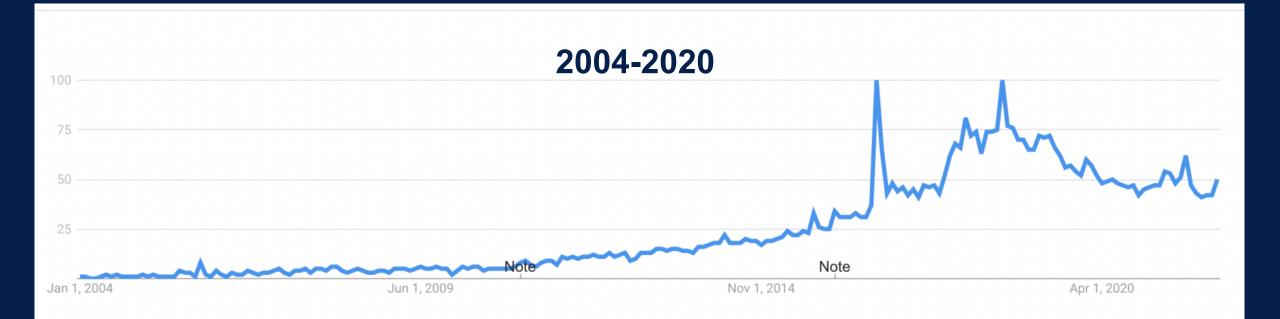


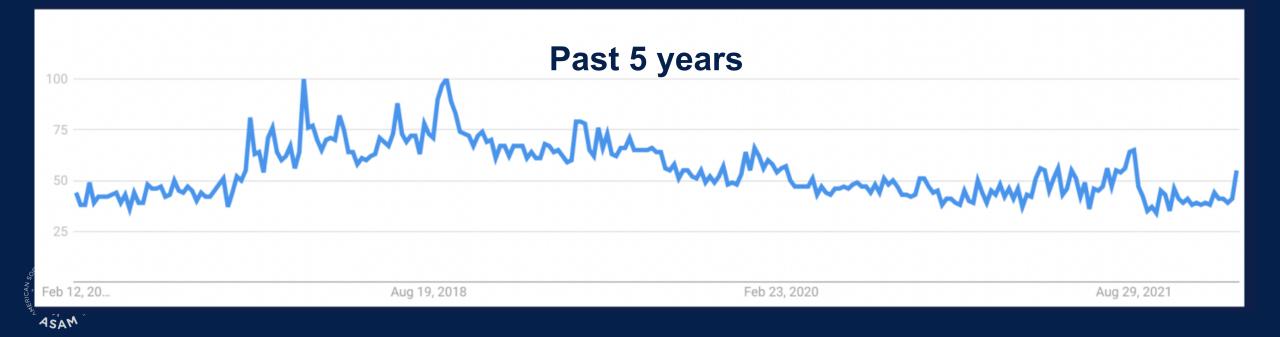




Prevalence estimates vary widely

- National Survey on Drug Use and Health (2018-2019)
 - past-month rate: 0.3%
 - past-year rate: 0.8% (2.6 million)
- Covvey et al. (2020): 6.1% had ever tried kratom
- American Kratom Association: ~15 million





Past hour, as of February 8, 2022







Check for update:

Non-Prescribed Buprenorphine Use Mediates the Relationship between Heroin Use and Kratom Use among a Sample of Polysubstance Users

Kirsten E. Smith ^(ba,b), Amanda M. Bunting^{*c}, Robert Walker^{b,d}, Martin T. Hall ^(ba,b), Oliver Grundmann ^(be, and Olivia Castillo^f)



Drug and Alcohol Dependence

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Kratom as a substitute for opioids: Results from an online survey

Marion A. Coe^{a,*}, Janine L. Pillitteri^b, Mark A. Sembower^b, Karen K. Gerlach^b, Jack E. Henningfield^{a,c}

JOURNAL OF ADDICTIVE DISEASES 2020, VOL. 38, NO. 4, 506–513 https://doi.org/10.1080/10550887.2020.1788914 Taylor & Francis Taylor & Francis Group



Prevalence and characteristics of self-reported kratom use in a representative US general population sample

Jordan R. Covvey, PharmD, PhD, BCPS^a (), Samantha M. Vogel, PharmD, BCPP^{b,c}, Alyssa M. Peckham, PharmD, BCPP^{d,e} and Kirk E. Evoy, PharmD, BCACP, BC-ADM, CTTS^{b,f,g} ()

ORIGINAL RESEARCH



Self-reported Health Diagnoses and Demographic Correlates With Kratom Use: Results from an Online Survey

Rhiannon Bath, Tanner Bucholz, Amy F. Buros, PhD, Darshan Singh, PhD, Kirsten E. Smith, MS, Charles A. Veltri, PhD, and Oliver Grundmann, PhD



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect
Drug and Alcohol Dependence

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/drugalcdep

Full length article

Kratom (*Mitragyna speciosa*): User demographics, use patterns, and implications for the opioid epidemic

Albert Garcia-Romeu^{a,*}, David J. Cox^a, Kirsten E. Smith^b, Kelly E. Dunn^a, Roland R. Griffiths^{a,c}



Drug and Alcohol Dependence

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/drugalcdep

Therapeutic benefit with caveats?: Analyzing social media data to understand the complexities of kratom use

Kirsten E. Smith^{a,*}, Jeffrey M. Rogers^a, Destiny Schriefer^a, Oliver Grundmann^b



Kratom Use in the US: Both a Regional Phenomenon and a White Middle-Class Phenomenon? Evidence From NSDUH 2019 and an Online Convenience Sample

Jeffrey M. Rogers¹*, Kirsten E. Smith¹, Justin C. Strickland² and David H. Epstein



Experimental and Clinical Psychopharmacology

© 2021 American Psychological Association ISSN: 1064-1297

https://doi.org/10.1037/pha0000518

Social, Psychological, and Substance Use Characteristics of U.S. Adults Who Use Kratom: Initial Findings From an Online, Crowdsourced Study

Kirsten E. Smith¹, Kelly E. Dunn², Oliver Grundmann³, Albert Garcia-Romeu², Jeffrey M. Rogers¹, Marc T. Swogger⁴, and David H. Epstein¹ Survey (& Social Media) Self-**Report:** Who is using kratom?

- Sex/Gender split.
- Mostly Non-Hispanic White
- Late 30s-early 40s (though this is changing)
- Most high-school educated, many college-educated.
- Income distribution
- Most using 1-5 years
- Many use regularly, but some report having quit or used intermittently.
- Doses 2-5 times per day on average.
- Preference for kratom over other substances varies.



Survey (& Social Media) Self-**Report:** Who is using kratom?

- Use initiation Early or Late 30s
- Other drug use history or current substance use.
- Poorer psychosocial and health indicators.

...and we're starting to see shifts already



Dosing Routines & Effects







59.7% Used kratom>100 times

80.6% Used kratom >4 times per week (regular use)

61.9 average weeks of regular use

41.9% Considers themselves *current* regular kratom user

2.7 average kratom doses per day



65.0 Weeks spent using on typical dosing regimen

Acute effects:

79.8% Felt effect every (or almost every) time kratom was dosed.

Onset of effects (time for typical kratom dose effects to begin):

0.0% Seconds **82.9%** Minutes **11.6%** Hours

Duration of effects (time to stop feeling typical dose effects):1.6% Minutes91.5% Hours7.0% Unsure because I would dose before effects wore off.

Typical regular kratom dose			
Capsules	5.38 (±4.8)		
Grams	4.57 (±3.6)		
Spoonfuls	2.52 (±2.7)		
Tablespoons	2.09 (±1.0)		
Cups of Teas	1.62 (±1.1)		

41.1% typically use *more* during the first waking hour

54.3% would hate to give up their first kratom dose of the day compared to other times of day.

16.3% Dose 31-60 minutes after waking

23.3% Dose 6-30 minutes after waking **55.8%** Dose >60 minutes after waking



4.7% Dose <5 minutes after waking

Kratom Use Motivations





The list of motivations keeps growing...

	N	%	М	(SD)
			effectiveness	effectiveness
Just to feel less crappy in general and improve quality of life.	86	66.7	74.2	(±21.9)
Self-treat anxiety symptoms.	69	53.5	69.4	(±22.9)
Address occasional feelings of sleepiness or low energy.	65	50.4	78.0	(±21.2)
Relieve short-term pain (acute pain management)	64	49.6	71.9	(±22.1)
For recreation, fun, or to relax.	63	48.8	72.4	(±24.6)
Boost energy, stamina and/or endurance (for work, exercise).	62	48.1	77.1	(±21.8)
Reduce social anxiety.	60	46.5	75.8	(±17.4)
Self-treat depression symptoms.	54	41.8	66.6	(±22.7)
Self-treat long-term pain issues and symptoms (chronic pain management)	46	35.7	72.1	(±21.6)
Kratom is safer than other substances.	43	33.3	90.4	(±11.2)
To achieve a euphoric high.	39	30.2	70.9	(±22.3)
As a short-term substitute/replacement for opioids (rx opioids, heroin).	32	24.8	66.7	(±27.1)
Couldn't get a hold of other, more preferred drugs.	31	24.0	75.4	(±24.4)
Self-treat headaches/migraines.	31	24.0	65.3	(±22.9)



	N	%	М	(SD)
			effectiveness	effectiveness
Relieve withdrawal symptoms from nonprescribed opioids or heroin	25	19.4	72.2	(±25.1)
Self-treat chronic fatigue syndrome.	25	19.4	72.7	(±24.4)
As a short-term substitute/replacement for alcohol.	24	18.6	66.3	(±21.9)
Doctors won't prescribe you the drugs you need.	24	18.6	82.3	(±19.8)
Self-treat ADD/ADHD symptoms.	24	18.6	61.6	(±24.4)
Self-treat post-traumatic stress symptoms.	23	17.8	61.9	(±28.3)
As a long-term substitute/replacement for opioids (rx opioids, heroin).	21	16.3	74.6	(±24.9)
Relieve withdrawal symptoms from medically prescribed opioids	20	15.5	74.2	(±22.8)
Take as part of a self-designed "stack" of drugs that help you feel good.	18	14.0	69.4	(±21.6)
Because you prefer the kratom "high" to "highs" you get from other drugs.	16	12.4	78.0	(±21.7)
To believe withdrawal symptoms from a variety of different drugs.	14	10.9	71.9	(±25.7)
As a short-term substitute/replacement for stimulants (meth, cocaine)	13	10.1	72.4	(±28.9)
Self-treat irritable bowel syndrome.	13	10.1	77.1	(±18.6)
As a long-term substitute/replacement for alcohol.	10	7.8	75.8	(±24.7)
Self-treat bipolar symptoms.	10	7.8	66.6	(±26.1)
Relieve alcohol withdrawal symptoms	8	6.2	72.1	(±29.7)



	N	%	М	(SD)
			effectiveness	effectiveness
Relieve withdrawal symptoms for nonprescribed buprenorphine	7	5.4	90.4	(±15.3)
As a long-term substitute/replacement for buprenorphine	5	3.9	70.9	(±16.0)
As a long-term substitute/replacement for stimulants	4	3.1	66.7	(±6.9)
Relieve withdrawal from "nootropics" or cognitive-enhancing supplements.	4	3.1	75.4	(±13.7)
Relieve withdrawal symptoms from nonprescribed methadone	4	3.1	65.3	(±4.7)
Relieve withdrawal symptoms from prescribed buprenorphine	4	3.1	72.2	(±3.1)
As a short-term substitute/replacement for buprenorphine	3	2.3	72.7	(±14.0)
As a short-term substitute/replacement for methadone.	3	2.3	66.3	(±13.1)
As a long-term substitute/replacement for methadone.	3	2.3	82.3	(±4.5)
Difficulties obtaining buprenorphine or methadone.	3	2.3	61.6	(±8.5)
Relieve withdrawal symptoms from prescribed methadone	2	1.6	61.9	(±7.8)
None of these.	1	0.8		•



Kratom Withdrawal





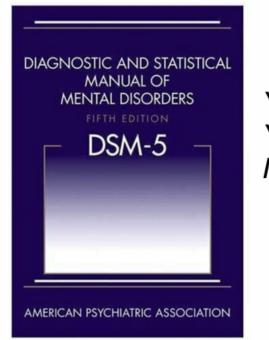
	Total (I	N=129)
		М
Anxiety	32.6%	63.2
Irritability	32.6%	63.5
Desire to use another		
substance	28.7%	67.1
Low energy	28.7%	68.9
Difficulty Sleeping	22.5%	74.3
Restlessness	22.5%	56.2
Nausea	21.7%	47.0
Body aches	21.7%	63.1
No energy	20.9%	75.5
Upset stomach	20.2%	52.0
Depressed mood	20.2%	66.1
Mild-moderate kratom craving	19.4%	67.8
Daytime sleepiness	18.6%	68.7
Hot flashes	15.5%	54.0
Runny nose	14.7%	55.9
Restless legs	13.2%	65.5
Craving for another drug	13.2%	77.0
Cold flashes	7.8%	62.0
Watery eyes	7.0%	64.2
Vomiting/emesis	6.2%	22.4
Intense kratom craving	5.4%	89.9

	nt KUD :38)		ed KUD =23)	Never Kl	JD (N=68)
-	М	-	М		М
50.0%	73.1	43.5%	70.9	19.1%	42.8
55.3%	74.1	34.8%	76.6	19.1%	38.4
52.6%	75.3	26.1%	73.0	16.2%	48.8
50.0%	82.6	26.1%	71.0	17.6%	46.0
42.1%	71.8	26.1%	82.5	10.3%	73.1
44.7%	58.8	21.7%	65.1	10.3%	43.9
36.8%	52.5	34.8%	48.1	8.8%	32.8
44.7%	68.4	21.7%	51.2	8.8%	57.8
36.8%	88.4	26.1%	69.3	10.3%	55.0
36.8%	58.9	21.7%	56.8	10.3%	34.9
39.5%	75.5	17.4%	69.0	10.3%	44.4
36.8%	69.0	17.4%	81.8	10.3%	57.6
23.7%	84.0	21.7%	81.0	14.7%	48.8
36.8%	51.4	8.7%	81.5	5.9%	49.8
34.2%	68.4	17.4%	24.3	2.9%	38.0
21.1%	82.6	21.7%	57.8	5.9%	40.8
36.8%	76.6	8.7%	68.0	1.5%	100.0
18.4%	63.4	4.3%	68.0	2.9%	54.2
18.4%	73.1	8.7%	33.0	0.0%	0.0
10.5%	35.3	4.3%	36.0	4.4%	0.7
15.8%	94.2	4.3%	64.1	0.0%	0.0

Kratom Use Disorder?







Yes Yes, but not in the past year No 29.5% Current (past-year) KUD (n=38)
17.8% Remitted KUD (n=23)
52.7% Never KUD (n=68)

<u>Lifetime Severity</u> Mild 21.7% Moderate 0.5%

Severe 0.5%

Past-year Severity Mild 14.0% Moderate 7.0% Severe 8.5%

...but something important we noticed



Individual Symptoms for kratom DSM-5 SUD diagnosis

I used kratom in larger amounts and/or over a longer period than I had intended to.	45.7%
I kept using the same amount of kratom, but didn't feel it as much.	38.8%
I needed to use larger amounts of kratom just to feel the same effect.	33.3%
I had physical or psychological withdrawal symptoms during times I stopped using kratom.	33.3%
I made at least one unsuccessful attempt to cut down or control my kratom use.	32.6%
I experienced cravings, strong desires, or urges for the kratom.	31.8%
I kept using kratom in order to avoid withdrawal symptoms.	28.7%
I kept using kratom despite knowing it was causing or worsening physical or psychological problems for me.	15.5%
I spent a great deal of time on activities necessary to get kratom, use the kratom, or recover from kratom's effects.	15.5%
I kept using kratom despite knowing it was causing or worsening social or interpersonal problems for me.	14.0%
I gave up or reduced some important social, occupational, or recreational activities because of my kratom use.	10.9%
My kratom use repeatedly interfered with my major role obligations (at work, school, or home).	9.3%
I repeatedly used kratom in situations where it was physically hazardous.	8.5%



BACK TO DOSE....

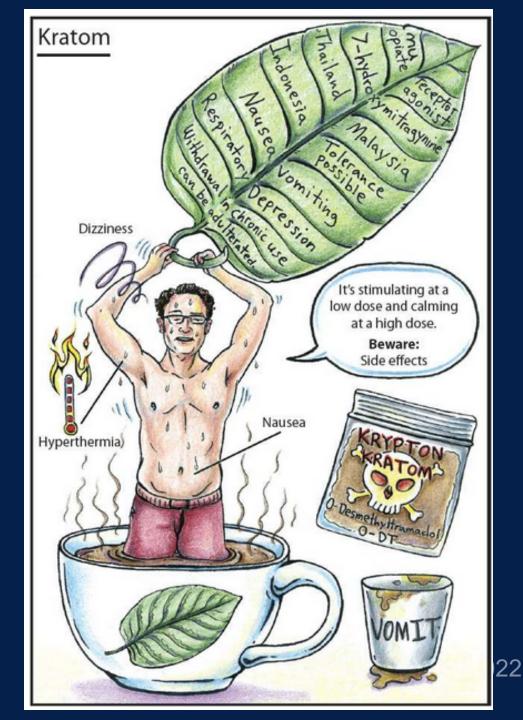
Among those who reported feeling effects from each dose (N=103)	
Effects are compatible with and help me meet my daily obligations.	
Effects are compatible with, but do not help me meet my daily obligations.	
The kratom effects are <i>not</i> compatible with my daily obligations.	
No, the effects are not compatible with my daily obligations, and they sometimes undermine my ability to meet daily obligations.	
Don't use enough to know if effects are compatible or helpful daily.	
None of those are quite true for me	1.00%



A (Very) Brief Survey of Kratom Pharmacology, Toxicology, and Therapy



Kloss, B. T. (2014). McGraw Hill Education, NY.



How Does Kratom Work?

Proposed Mechanisms of Mitragynine Activity
 Partial agonism of μ opioid receptors
 Partial agonism (antagonism?) of κ and δ opioid receptors

Agonism of α₂ receptors
 Antagonism of 5-HT_{2A} receptors
 Serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibition



#ASAMAnnual2022 Boyer, E. W. *et al.* (2008) Addiction; 103(6): 1048-1050.

Acute Clinical Effects of Kratom Exposures Reported to US and Thai Poison Centers

Common Effects

Hallucinations/ delusions	63 (8.3)	Effects 5 (3.0)	68 (7.3)
Coma	56 (7.4)	3 (1.8)	59 (6.4)
Tremor	53 (7.0)	5 (3.0)	58 (6.3)
Diaphoresis	43 (5.7)	12 (7.1)	55 (5.9)
Respiratory depression	51 (6.7)	0 (0)	51 (5.5)
Electrolyte abnormality	26 (3.4)	21 (12.5)	47 (5.1)
Muscle rigidity	7 (0.9)	32 (19.1)	39 (4.2)
Dystonia	5 (0.7)	16 (9.5)	21 (2.3)
Nausea	75 (9.9)	14 (8.3)	89 (9.6)



#ASAMAnnual2022

Davidson, C., et al. (2021) The American journal of drug and alcohol abuse, 47(1): 74-83.

Kratom-Associated Toxicity and Deaths

	Southeast Asia	West (US and Europe)
Side Effects	Weight loss, dehydration, constipation, skin hyperpigmentation	N/V, stomach pain, chills and sweats, dizziness, unsteadiness, visual sx
Toxicity	Few literature reports of serious toxicity or death	
Where Obtained	Locally	Internet, head shops
How Used	Often used alone (but not always)	Often combined with other drugs (illicit and meds)
Legal Status	Illegal in Thailand, Singh, D. e	thegal in most of US and: 41-46

Proposed Kratom Toxicity Mechanisms

Behavioral Factors

Buying kratom products online/in stores vs locally

Mixing it with other substances vs. using it alone

Pharmacological Factors

Respiratory: Opioid respiratory depression potentiation

Stimulatory: seizures, alpha stimulation

Cardiotoxicity: QTc prolongation w/ torsades/sudden cardiac death
Hepatotoxicity: different CYP2D6 isoforms



#ASAMAnnual2022 Kerrigan, S. and Basiliere, S., 2022. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Forensic Science*, *4*(1),

Are there any kratom-only deaths?

None with totally convincing evidence
 Routine testing does not detect mitragynine
 Most cases lack comprehensive toxicological testing

Review of UK cases (2019)
156 kratom-associated deaths
129 cases with post-mortem tox data reported
27 cases with mitragynine as the "sole drug" implicated
6 cases reported only finding mitragynine on analysis



#ASAMAnnual2022 Corkery, J.M*., et al*., (2019) *Journal of psychopharmacology*, 33(9): 1102-1123.

Are there any kratom-only deaths?

CO, USA (2019): retested blood samples from four "kratomonly" deaths using HPLC-MS

Three of the four cases actually contained multiple drugs

Fourth case could not be tested due to insufficient sample

*****Takeaways:

Many coingestants are being missed by standard clinical and forensic testing regimens



Most kratom-associated deaths are polysubstance ingestions

#ASAMAnnual2022 Gershman, K. *et al.* (2019) NEJM; 380: 1-2.

Kratom Toxicity Workup

Primarily a clinical diagnosis
 <u>Good history and physical exam</u>
 Consider withdrawal in regular users

Labs based upon clinical judgment
CMP if liver toxicity suspected
UDS: unlikely to be helpful

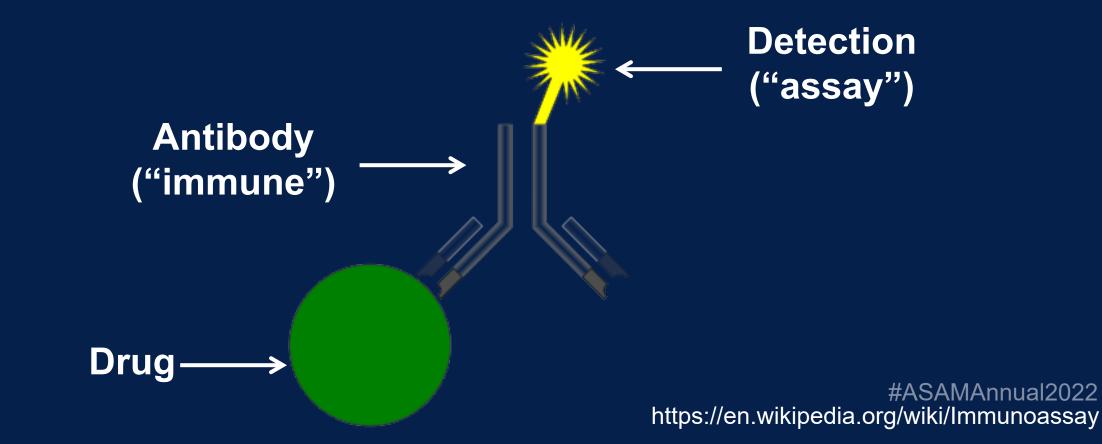


#ASAMAnnual2022

Schimmel, J. and Dart, R.C., 2020. Drugs, 80(3), pp.263-283.

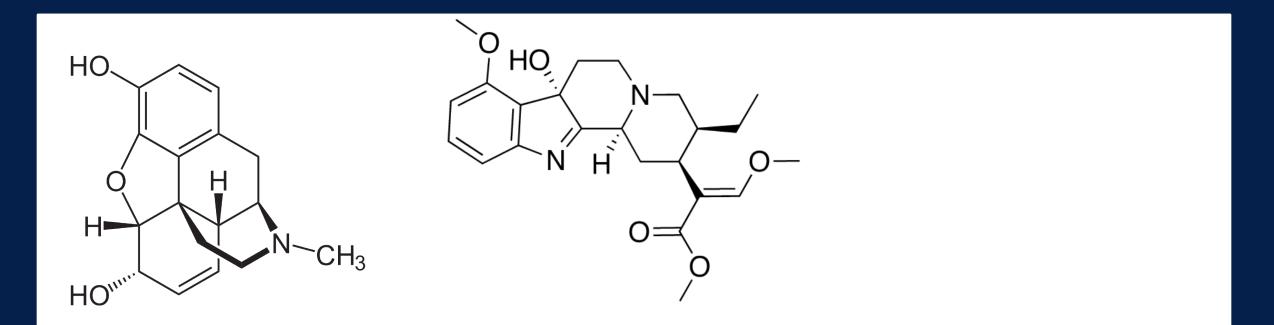
Kratom Will Not Show Up on a Urine Drug Screen

Immunoassay to detect common street drugs of abuse or their metabolites in urine





Mitragynine Structure Comparison



morphine

mitragynine

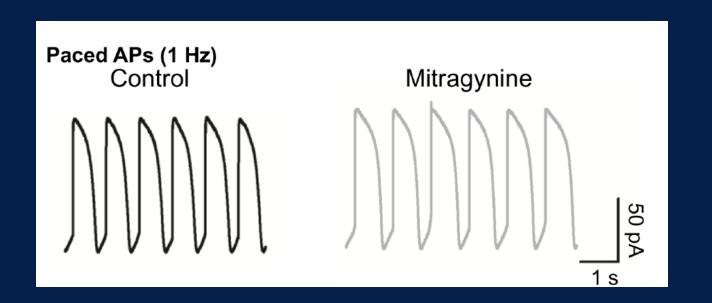
yohimbine

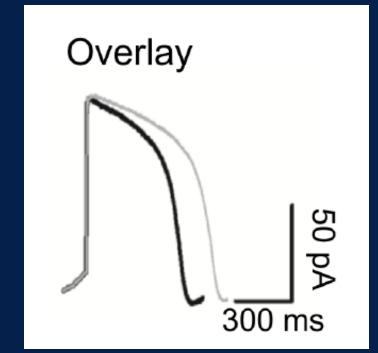


#ASAMAnnual2022 Obeng, S., *et al*. (2019) *Journal of medicinal chemistry* 63(1): 433-439.

Kratom Toxicity Workup

*#***EKG: look for possible QTc prolongation**





#ASAMAnnual2022 Lu, J. *et al.* (2014) PLOS ONE; 9(12): 1-18.



Kratom Toxicity Treatment

Primarily supportive

Will naloxone work?
 A definite maybe
 In vitro: effect of mitragynine alkaloids was reversed by naloxone in guinea pig ileum



#ASAMAnnual2022 Horie, S. *et al.* (2005) Planta Med.; 71: 231-236.

Will naloxone work?

In vivo: One case report detailing successful resuscitation of an opioid toxidrome attributed to sole kratom use
 Use of other opioids was r/o by GC/MS
 Doesn't specify which opioids were tested for

If the pt presents with an opioid toxidrome, give naloxone
 But use it to treat <u>respiratory depression</u>

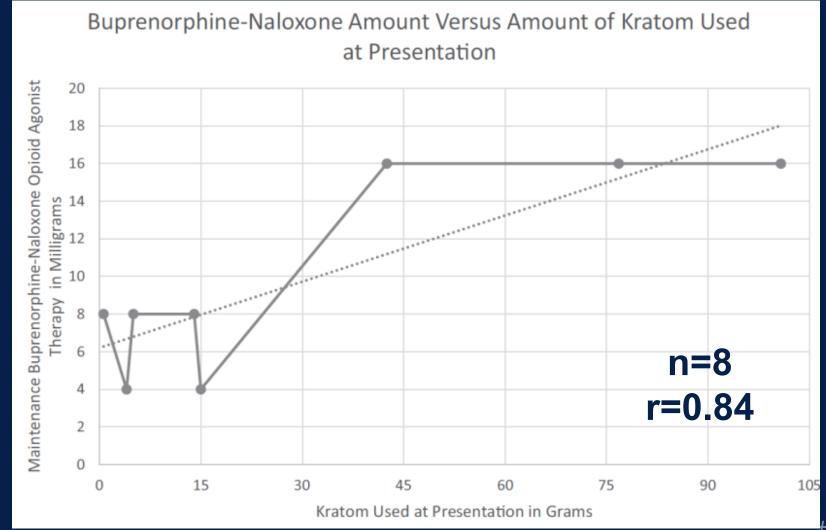


#ASAMAnnual2022 Overbeek DL *et al*. (2019) Clin. Pract. Cases Emerg. Med.; 3(1):24-26.

Treatment of Kratom Withdrawal/KUD

Reference	Withdrawal Treatment	KUD/Pain Treatment
Agapoff (2019)	Buprenorphine/naloxone	Buprenorphine/naloxone
Bowe (2020)	Buprenorphine/naloxone	Buprenorphine/naloxone
Buresh (2018)	N/A	Buprenorphine/naloxone
Diep (2018)	Intubation, sedation	Buprenorphine/naloxone
Galbis-Reig (2016)	Clonidine, Hydroxyzine	Naltrexone
Khazaeli (2018)	Buprenorphine/naloxone	Buprenorphine/naloxone
Mackay (2018)	Morphine	N/A
McWhirter (2010)	Dihydrocodeine, Lofexidine	N/A
Sheleg (2011)	Buprenorphine	Methadone, Oxycodone
Stanciu (2019)	Clonidine, Gabapentin	N/A
Vento (2022)	Pregabalin, Bupropion,	Tramadol. Clomipramine

Do Doses Correlate?



#ASAMAnnual2022

Weiss, S.T. & Douglas, H.E. (2021) J Add. Med, 15(2): 167-



Treatment of KUD

Table 2. Previous Daily Kratom Use and Daily Stabilizing Buprenorphine Dose Comparisons.

Past kratom use <mark>(</mark> g/d)	No. of patients	Stabilizing buprenorphine dose	
0–10	3	10 mg	
11–20	4	12 mg	
21–30	2	8 mg	
31–40	1	16 mg n=28	
41–50	1	^{10 mg} r=0.12	
51–60	7	15 mg	
61–70	-	_	
71–80	2	16 mg	
81–90	-	_	
91–100	1	12 mg	
101–110	-	_	
111–120	2	16 mg	
>121	4	12 mg	

#ASAMAnnual2022

Broyan, V.R., et al. (2022) Substance Abuse, 43(1): 763-766.



Summary

Kratom has been used in the West for over a decade but has been used in Southeast Asia for centuries.

Kratom alkaloids have multiple pharmacological effects that are thought to cause its stimulatory and opioid properties

Kratom intoxication, withdrawal, and dependence is primarily a clinical diagnosis and treatment is supportive, but opioid agonist therapy appears to be useful



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