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Do You Get What You Paid For? An Examination of Products Advertised as Kratom

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Abstract

Although some novel psychoactive substances (NPS) are newly discovered chemicals, others are traditional or indigenous substances that are introduced to new markets. One of these latter substances is a plant many people refer to as kratom. Indigenous to Southeast Asia and used for a variety of instrumental and recreational purposes, kratom has recently become available to Western drug users. Kratom is somewhat unique in that the plant contains two different psychoactive chemicals, which have both stimulant (mitragynine) and narcotic (7-hydroxymitragynine) properties. Thus, kratom may appeal to different types of drug users for reasons other than curiosity. In the current study, 15 samples of products that were either directly advertised as kratom or were listed in the results of a web search (but were not directly advertised as kratom) were purchased for testing. After laboratory testing, it was determined that all products advertised as kratom contained the active chemical mitragynine, but 7-hydroxymitragynine was not detected in any of the samples. Implications are discussed.

Keywords: Drug purity; kratom; mitragynine.

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