



Louisiana Society of Addiction Medicine

A Chapter of American Society of Addiction Medicine

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September 13, 2022

The Honorable Larry Bagley
Chairman
House Committee on Health and Welfare
900 North Third Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

The Honorable Fred Mills, Jr.
Chairman
Senate Committee on Health and Welfare
900 North Third Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Re: LSAM's Position on Kratom

Dear Representative Bagley and Senator Mills,

On behalf of the Louisiana Society of Addiction Medicine (LSAM), the medical specialty society representing physicians and other clinicians in Louisiana who specialize in the prevention and treatment of addiction, we write today to express our current position on kratom policy initiatives ahead of the fast-approaching 2023 legislative sessions.

Kratom is an intoxicating herbal extract derived from the leaves of evergreen trees (*Mitragyna speciosa*) in Southeast Asia.ⁱ Based upon current research, kratom is believed to act on opioid receptors.ⁱⁱ At low doses, kratom functions as a stimulant, prompting users to feel more energetic. At higher doses, it reduces pain and may bring on euphoria. At very high doses, it acts as a sedative and can be deadly.ⁱⁱⁱ According to figures from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), during an 18-month period kratom contributed to 91 fatal overdoses and was identified in the bloodstream of individuals in 152 other fatal overdose cases.^{iv}

Despite its potential harms, kratom use is increasing and its marketing is becoming more aggressive. Kratom advocates assert that kratom is an effective treatment for wide-ranging conditions such as muscle pain, panic attacks, and extreme diarrhea. However, current research supporting kratom's medical benefits is insufficient to justify its substantial risk to consumers.^v Further, due to the unregulated nature of the small but expanding kratom industry, retailers are not required to disclose health risks to consumers, jeopardizing product transparency and threatening public health.

Kratom is currently legal in 44 states, including Louisiana.^{vi} In the upcoming legislative session, we anticipate that many lawmakers will seek to develop a regulatory framework for kratom to backstop its retail sales. **We strongly urge you and your colleagues to operate with extreme caution when considering legislation to expand the recreational accessibility of kratom.** Current scientific evidence simply does not suggest that kratom offers enough medical benefits to justify its risks. Clearly, more research is necessary to accurately evaluate kratom's properties. But kratom retailers and advocates have an incentive to continue downplaying its significant risk to consumers. **Thus, we oppose the retail sale and distribution of kratom in Louisiana until further research substantiates its supposed medical benefits, especially when the dangers of this opioid drug of abuse are clear.**

LSAM greatly appreciates the opportunity to comment on this important and emerging policy issue. We are available to consult about kratom legislation on a case-by-case basis if necessary. In these instances, please contact our president, Dr. Gregory Caudill, at (504) 300-9330 or at

caudill1872@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'GC' followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Gregory Caudill, MD, FASAM
President, Louisiana Society of Addiction Medicine

ⁱ Department of Justice/Drug Enforcement Administration. (2020). Drug Fact Sheet: Kratom. dea.gov. https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2020-06/Kratom-2020_0.pdf

ⁱⁱ National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2019). Kratom. National Institutes of Health. <https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/kratom#why-use-kratom>

ⁱⁱⁱ Stenson, J. (2019). What is kratom? The popular herbal supplement has caught flak from the FDA. NBCNews.com. <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/what-kratom-popular-herbal-supplement-has-caught-flak-fda-n1066526>

^{iv} Olsen, E. O. M., O'Donnell, J., Mattson, C. L., Schier, J. G., & Wilson, N. (2019). Notes from the Field: Unintentional Drug Overdose Deaths with Kratom Detected – 27 States, July 2016–December 2017. *MMWR. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 68(14), 326–327. <https://doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6814a2>

^v Veltri, C., & Grundmann, O. (2019). Current Perspectives on the Impact of Kratom Use. *Substance Abuse and Rehabilitation*, 10, 23–31. <https://doi.org/10.2147/sar.s164261>

^{vi} Gianutsos, G. (2017). The DEA Changes Its Mind on Kratom. *U.S. Pharmacist*. <https://www.uspharmacist.com/article/the-dea-changes-its-mind-on-kratom>