Kratom is instead, in plain terms, an opioid, like codeine or hydrocodone, plus components of a psychoactive drug. For that reason, we applauded the DEA and the FDA. Because Kratom is a drug, whether it is "natural" or not is irrelevant. If some supplement maker crushes up opium poppy seeds to put them in a supplement, that is also completely natural, but it is not allowed to be sold as a supplement, it is still a drug. Kratom is no different. It certainly does not matter how many inexperienced proponents or people educated by publicity reps claim "it is in the coffee family." Supplement lobbyists use "family" to make it sound like kratom could be twins with coffee but there are over 13,000 other species in the Rubiaceae family. Also in that family is Psychotria viridis, a key source for ayahuasca, another dangerous psychoactive like kratom.

It's not a harmless analgesic, as the surge in calls to poison control centers have shown. Kratom is a drug that has been directly linked to psychosis, seizures, and deaths. In July, seven months after our indictment of this drug came out, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that from 2010 to 2015 calls to U.S. poison centers related to kratom increased 1,000 percent. Major life threatening instances occurred in over 7 percent of cases. Minimally or hypothetically harmful chemicals like lead and chromium-6 are all over the news with a minute fraction of that harm and environmental groups scaremonger things like BPA, formaldehyde and parabens, which can't possibly harm anyone, yet media are giving kratom false equivalence with...
claims this will prevent opioid abuse. Here is what it has done to people, according to the CDC: In those poisoned by this drug, tachycardia - rapid heart rate - occurred in 25 percent, agitation or irritability in almost 24 percent, drowsiness in almost 20 percent, nausea was almost 15 percent and hypertension was in almost 12 percent.

That's a lot of different health effects, none of them good, and it's no surprise. Mitragynine, the major psychotropic alkaloid that gives kratom its properties, binds to numerous receptors, so the medicinal value of kratom is suspect, but it is certainly a drug.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Receptor name</th>
<th>Receptor site</th>
<th>Recepto reffect/ function</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adrenergic alpha 2</td>
<td>Heart</td>
<td>Blood pressure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gut</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gastric motility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brain</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sedation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brain</td>
<td></td>
<td>Analgesia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smooth muscle cells</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bronchodilation/asthma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neurons</td>
<td></td>
<td>Regulation of adrenaline levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dopamine D2</td>
<td>Brain</td>
<td>Norepinephrine regulation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blood vessels</td>
<td></td>
<td>Norepinephrine regulation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adrenal gland</td>
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<td>Blood pressure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opioid mu</td>
<td></td>
<td>Respiratory depression</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sedation</td>
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<td>Analgesia</td>
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<td>Nausea</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Constipation</td>
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<td>Opioid kappa:</td>
<td></td>
<td>Halucination</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Depression</td>
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<td>Anxiety</td>
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<td>Opioid delta</td>
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<td>Analgesia</td>
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<td>Serotonin 5HT2C</td>
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<td>Appetite</td>
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<td>Reproductive behavior</td>
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<td>Mood regulation</td>
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<td>Serotonin 5HT7</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A table with a partial list of some of the known receptor targets of mitragynine, and the function of those receptors. By Josh Bloom, ACSH.
As Dr. Josh Bloom, Senior Director of Chemical and Pharmaceutical Sciences at the American Council on Science and Health, noted, "kratom is not one chemical substance, it is a mixture of more than 40. Twenty-five of them belong to a broad class called alkaloids nitrogen-containing chemicals that are found in plants, many of which are potent poisons."

A poison isn't healthier for you because it's natural. Despite that, some groups are claiming that the Drug Enforcement Agency is being too heavy-handed - basically, we should wait until there are a pile of dead bodies before they do anything. It misses the point, which is that just about anything can be foisted off on the public as a supplement until it kills people.

Due to concern about the surge in poisonings, the Drug Enforcement Agency published a "notice of intent" to list kratom as a Schedule I substance last month, putting it right along with heroin and LSD, effective September 30th. Immediately the American Kratom Association began to fight back, convincing politicians on one side of the aisle that this is a free market issue, and those on the other side of the aisle that it should be "studied" by the U.S. government's alternative medicine group, now called the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, rather than being scheduled. They got 51 members of the U.S. House of Representatives to agree, writing that "consumer access and choice of an internationally recognized herbal supplement" would be hindered by the DEA.

It's not in our mandate to be concerned about what DEA wants to ban, we are actually more worried about what they still allow, and that applies to any number of supplements which are either useless junk or contain dangerous unlabeled chemicals. That's a public health issue and is due to the disastrous Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act of 1994, which was signed by President Bill Clinton (but to be fair, Senators Orrin Hatch and Tom Harkin share blame for shepherding it through) and designed to prevent FDA from tightening regulations regarding supplement labeling. Since then, with scant accountability unless someone dies, the supplements business in the United States has gone out of control.

It is a drug. It should have to undergo clinical trials before it can be sold, the same way pharmaceutical drugs must.

In discussion with Dr. Bloom, he asked, "How does it get a free pass to be sold in vitamin stores, while Crestor has to jump through hoops for 10 years?"

NOTE:

(1)

The full list of U.S. House Democrats signing the DEA/OMB letters:
Barbara Lee - CA-13
Jim Costa - CA-16
Michael M. Honda - CA-17
Zoe Lofgren - CA-19
Julia Brownley - CA-26
Scott Peters - CA-52
Jared Polis - CO-02
Lois Frankel - FL-22
Hank Johnson - GA-04
Tulsi Gabbard - HI-02
John Yarmuth - KS-03
Michael Capuano - MA-07
John Conyers - MI-13
Betty McCollum - MN-04
Keith Ellison - MN-05
Steve Israel - NY-03
Tim Ryan - OH-13
Susanne Bonamici - OR-01
Earl Blumenauer - OR-03
Peter DeFazio - OR-04
Steve Cohen - TN-09
Robert C. "Bobby" Scott - VA-03
Gerald Connolly - VA-11
Susan DelBene - WA-01
Adam Smith - WA-09
Denny Heck - WA-10
Gwen Moore - WI-04
Mark Pocan - WI-02

The full list of U.S. House Republicans signing the DEA/OMB letters:
Paul Gosar - AZ-04
Matt Salmon - AZ-05
Dana Rohrabacher - CA-48
Scott Tipton - CO-03
Barry Loudermilk - GA-11
Tom Graves - GA-14
Steve King - IA-04
Raul Labrador - ID-01
Thomas Massie - KS-04
Dan Benishek, M.D. - MI-01
Justin Amash - MI-03
Tom Emmer - MN-06
Walter Jones - NC-3
Richard Hudson - NC-08
Frank LoBiondo - NJ-02
Leonard Lance - NJ-07
Joe Heck, D.O. - NV-03
Brad Wenstrup, M.D. - OH-02
Mark Sanford - SC-01
Mick Mulvaney - SC-05
Ted Poe - TX-01