

CLINICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF KRATOM ABUSERS IN THAILAND

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Introduction: Kratom (*Mitragyna speciosa* Korth) is a native tree autochthonous to Southeast Asia, especially in Thailand as traditional use as a folk medicine for centuries. Kratom is misused as a drug of abuse, becomes wide spread legally to many countries around the world and is easily available through the marketed online or some shops. Nowadays, the scientific and clinical studies of Kratom are rather limited, particularly the clinical data from chronic abusers.

Objectives: To collect and analyse the clinical characteristics data of Kratom abusers in Thailand.

Methods: We carried out a prospective study by interview, review and analyse the questionnaires data from Kratom abusers.

Results: 27 Kratom abused cases were totally included. All were male. The cases were from the central region including Bangkok (81.48%) and the south of Thailand (18.52%). The average age was 48.63 years. Most were agriculturists (40.74%). 48.1% of the cases were not graduated the primary school. The median income was 6,000 baht/month. The median abused duration was 10 years (the maximum 40 years). All ate leaves and did not use other substances of abuses. The most common method the cases used was chewing and swallowing whole fresh leaves (77.78%). The average amount was 16.15 leaves/day. The most common reason for starting the use of Kratom was to physically endure the hard work under the sun and to relieve the fatigue (74.07%). 77.78% of the cases used to use Kratom to treat some illnesses of which diarrhea was the most common. Some cases used Kratom to substitute for heroin, alcohol and amphetamine, and they were successful to rid of these addictions. When the cases ate more than usual, they reported that dizziness was the most common symptom (30.77%). The most common symptoms after stop eating Kratom (withdrawal symptoms) were myalgia (77.78%), yawning (51.85%) and jerking (44.44%). 85.16% of the cases did not use any methods to relieve withdrawal symptoms. All reported that there was no visit or admission to the hospital related to Kratom. 81.48% of the cases reported that they did not have side effects from Kratom. Most did not have weight and skin color changes during the abused period.

Conclusions: All cases were chronic abusers. The most common symptoms when the cases ate more and stopped eating were dizziness and myalgia, respectively. There were no serious withdrawal or toxicity symptoms reported. Most had no side effect from Kratom despite prolonged use. Some used Kratom as the remedy for heroin, alcohol and amphetamine withdrawal.