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Florida Official Prioritizes Politics Over Science

Millions of users' medical freedom is jeopardized by politics as usual and donors over facts

Jacksonville, FL — The Holistic Alternative Recovery Trust (HART) today responded to the press conference by Florida officials on the safety of 7-hydroxymitragynine (7-OH), a kratom-derived compound. While the action to ban 7-OH is framed as a public health measure, the facts tell a different story.

“The Attorney General’s comments are not grounded in science,” said Jeff Smith, HART National Policy Director. “Peer-reviewed studies have shown that both kratom and 7-OH, when taken orally, do not cause respiratory depression, the hallmark of fatal opioid overdoses.”

“National Poison Control data, FDA reports, and DEA toxicology reviews confirm there are zero deaths attributed to 7-OH. In the rare cases where 7-OH is present in the body of a deceased person, deadly drugs such as heroin or alcohol have been abused,” Smith explained. “By contrast, fentanyl and counterfeit medications are responsible for more than 100,000 U.S. overdose deaths each year. Singling out a naturally occurring kratom metabolite with no mortality signal diverts attention from the actual drivers of the overdose crisis.”

SOME OF THE FALSE CLAIMS MADE TODAY:

MYTH: *7-OH is 13 times more powerful than morphine*

FACT: This claim only applies to mice. It is not a measure of real-world use by humans.

This figure is taken out of context. It originated from an early 2004 mouse study (Matsumoto et al.) where researchers **injected** 7-hydroxymitragynine intravenously and compared its analgesic effects to morphine in animals.

That study does not reflect human use. **People do not inject 7-OH**, it is consumed orally (in tablets or sublingual forms) or produced naturally in the body when mitragynine is metabolized.

Oral pharmacology is completely different. When taken by mouth, 7-OH undergoes first-pass metabolism in the liver, which greatly reduces its potency compared to morphine. That’s why toxicologists and pharmacologists stress that the “13x morphine” claim is misleading.

MYTH: *7-OH is an opioid-(like morphine, oxycodone, or fentanyl).*

FACT: Chemically, 7-OH is an alkaloid found in kratom. It is not an opioid-like morphine, oxycodone, or fentanyl. Those are derived from the opium poppy or synthesized in a lab. Kratom, by contrast, is a plant in the coffee family.

7-OH does interact with the mu-opioid receptor, the same receptor that opioids act on. However, it acts as a biased agonist. Meaning, it provides analgesic effects without triggering the full cascade of side effects that cause respiratory depression and overdose in classical opioids.

Critics may label 7-OH an “opioid” simply because it binds to opioid receptors. But medical toxicologists, [like Dr. Edward Boyer](#), an emergency medicine physician specializing in medical toxicology, stresses that kratom and its alkaloids are pharmacologically distinct from opioids and do not carry the same overdose risks.



While 7-OH now faces a ban, traditional kratom products, associated with 174 confirmed deaths in just the past two years and thousands of serious injuries, remain untouched. The contrast raises troubling questions about who is shaping policy in Florida.

Kratom industry trade groups have long lobbied to eliminate 7-OH from the market, despite a safer profile than leaf kratom. Meanwhile, the popular kratom drink **'Feel Free', created by Global Kratom Coalition funder JW Ross** and marketed widely in convenience stores, has been the subject of alarming reports of addiction, severe withdrawal, and health effects over the past few months.

“Emergency scheduling is meant to address immediate, demonstrated dangers, not to eliminate market competitors under the guise of public health,” Smith said. “The Florida AG's job is to serve the people of Florida and protect them from imminent dangers. However, by pushing for government overreach into the lives of ordinary Floridians and banning products that have not been shown to be dangerous, he is only serving the interests of Big Kratom lobbyists. Floridians deserve medical freedom to choose among safe, regulated options, not political theater.”

HART will be working with Florida state legislators ahead of the 2026 session to introduce comprehensive, science-based regulations covering both 7-OH and kratom. HART believes Floridians deserve both consumer access and consumer safety, and that comes from real regulatory oversight—not actions driven by fear, misinformation, or special interest lobbying.

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About HART:

The Holistic Alternative Recovery Trust (HART) is a national nonprofit organization advocating for science-based policy, regulatory transparency, and access to safe, plant-based alternatives. 7-hydroxymitragynine (7-OH), a metabolite of mitragynine, the most abundant alkaloid found in kratom, is a new tool being used to improve public health. HART strongly supports robust regulation to mandate that all 7-OH products are manufactured safely, are marketed transparently, and are kept out of the hands of children. Learn more at hartsupporter.com.