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Title: Mitragyna speciosa use in the northern states of Malaysia: A cross-sectional study.

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Abstract: Abstract: Ethnopharmacological relevance: The consumption of Mitragyna speciosa (MS) for its psychoactive effects is widely reported amongst people in the villages in Thailand and Malaysia even though its use is illegal. Aim of the study: This study examined the pattern of MS use, its reported effects and explored its potential to cause dependence. Materials and methods: We used both convenience and snowball-sampling methods to recruit participants in a border town between two northern states in Malaysia. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with the use of a structured questionnaire on 562 respondents who gave oral consent to participate in the study. Results: The response rate was 91%. The majority of the respondents (88%) reported daily use of MS. The main mode of using MS was by drinking the MS extract as tea (90%). The mean age of starting MS use was 28.3 (SD=8.1) years. A variety of reasons were given for using MS including for social and recreational needs, stamina and physical endurance, pain relief and improved sexual performance. Despite its reported usefullness in weaning off opiate addiction, 460 (87%) admitted they were not able to stop using MS. Only education level had...
a statistically significant association with the ability to stop or not stop the use of MS ($\chi^2 = 31.0, df = 1, p < 0.001$). Significantly higher proportions of those with a lower education level (38%) were able to stop using MS compared to respondents with a higher education level. Conclusions: Our study provides important information on the pattern of MS use, its effects and its potential to cause addiction, as there has been growing interest in MS as evidenced by the number of advertisements for its sale on the Internet. Future study is required to explore its psychological and social impact on users.

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