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Protecting Consumer Access to Safe, Natural Kratom
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American Kratom Association Demands CBS *60 Minutes* Correct Major Errors and Explain Why Critical Scientific Evidence Was Omitted

AKA challenges broadcast's credibility after producers ignored pre-broadcast warnings, overlooked NMS Labs' own toxicology advisory, failed to report NIH's mitragynine research, and gave kratom critics extensive airtime without comparable scrutiny

WASHINGTON, D.C. — November 17, 2026 — The American Kratom Association today demanded substantial corrections, an editorial review, and a meaningful on-air response to the November 15 *60 Minutes* broadcast on kratom, charging that the program presented a materially incomplete and misleading account of federal drug policy, forensic science, and the potential benefits and risks of natural botanical kratom.

In an expanded formal letter to CBS News, the AKA identified significant factual errors and omissions that raise serious questions about the credibility and fairness of the broadcast.

"*60 Minutes* had the actual federal regulatory documents. They had our detailed written responses. They had access to the latest forensic science. Yet viewers received a report that misstated the DEA's threshold, ignored a critical second scheduling requirement, and omitted important evidence that did not fit the program's narrative," said Mac Haddow, Senior Fellow on Public Policy for the American Kratom Association.

"That is not the level of investigative rigor the public should expect from *60 Minutes*."

NMS Labs' Own Advisory Raises Questions About the Broadcast's Death Claims

One of the AKA's most serious concerns involves the interview with NMS Labs toxicologist Justin Brower.

Brower told viewers that he had encountered numerous deaths attributed exclusively to kratom.

But the broadcast did not explain NMS Labs' recently published advisory, *Mitragynine Alone No Longer Tells the Story: Rethinking Kratom Testing*.

The advisory warns that older or limited toxicology methods may fail to identify relevant compounds, including 7-hydroxymitragynine (7-OH) and mitragynine pseudoindoxyl (MGPI), potentially affecting the interpretation of kratom-related deaths.

It calls for comprehensive quantitative testing that distinguishes individual alkaloids and accounts for their chemical instability, possible conversion during analysis, and interactions with other substances.

"The laboratory represented as a leading authority in the program has itself published a warning that mitragynine-only testing is no longer sufficient to characterize many kratom-related exposures," Haddow stated.

“Why wasn’t that critical scientific qualification explained to viewers?”

The AKA acknowledges that it does not know whether Brower’s interview occurred before or after the NMS advisory was published, or whether he discussed those limitations during portions of the interview that did not air.

The Association is requesting that CBS clarify those questions.

The omission is particularly significant because the program also interviewed forensic scientist Alex Krotulski, coauthor of an October 2026 study documenting serious analytical challenges involving 7-OH, MGPI, and related compounds.

That research found that 7-OH concentrations in refrigerated blood declined by 89% over 112 days, accompanied by increased MGPI concentrations.

“Families deserve accurate conclusions about the deaths of their loved ones. They should not be led to believe that older toxicology results definitively establish natural kratom as the cause when critical compounds may not have been adequately tested,” Haddow said.

The AKA is calling for scientifically justified reassessment of historical cases where inadequate testing or retained evidence raises legitimate questions about the original conclusions.

NIH’s June 1 Announcement Directly Contradicts the Impression That Mitragynine Has No Serious Scientific Therapeutic Potential

The AKA also challenges the broadcast’s failure to report a significant announcement from the National Institutes of Health.

On June 1, 2026, NIH announced that its Investigational New Drug application for purified mitragynine had taken effect with FDA, allowing federal researchers to begin Phase I human safety research evaluating the compound as a potential treatment for opioid use disorder.

The broadcast instead presented kratom’s possible role in opioid withdrawal largely as a disputed industry claim and featured Dr. Andrew Kolodny dismissing its therapeutic prospects.

“The federal government’s own scientists are investigating purified mitragynine as a possible opioid use disorder treatment, yet that major development was missing from a national broadcast questioning whether kratom has any legitimate potential benefit,” Haddow said.

“That is an extraordinary omission.”

The AKA emphasizes that the NIH announcement does not establish that mitragynine is effective for opioid use disorder or that FDA has approved kratom as a treatment.

It does, however, demonstrate that NIH considers the compound sufficiently promising for controlled human research following preclinical investigation.

“Viewers deserved to know that this was an active federal scientific research question — not simply a marketing claim made by kratom advocates,” Haddow added.

Why Were Industry Relationships Scrutinized on One Side but Not the Other?

The AKA also questioned the broadcast's extensive treatment of lobbying expenditures and alleged political influence.

The Association disclosed more than $14 million in state and federal lobbying expenditures from 2016 through 2025 in its November 11 response to CBS, explaining that the money supported consumer protection legislation, manufacturing requirements, labeling standards, age restrictions, and continued access to natural botanical kratom.

Yet the program did not present a comparable accounting of lobbying and political activity by manufacturers seeking to preserve the market for concentrated 7-OH products.

Nor did it place the AKA's expenditures in the context of lobbying throughout the healthcare industry.

Pharmaceutical and health-products interests spent approximately $452 million on federal lobbying in 2025, according to OpenSecrets-derived data.

"If *60 Minutes* intends to follow the money, it should follow all of the money — not selectively investigate advocacy for natural kratom while overlooking competing commercial interests," Haddow said.

The Association also called for consistent scrutiny of potential economic interests in the addiction treatment and recovery industry, including any relevant relationships between treatment providers, pharmaceutical companies, and experts advocating particular drug-policy positions.

AKA Questions Incomplete Disclosure of Dr. Andrew Kolodny's Professional and Financial Relationships

The broadcast featured Dr. Andrew Kolodny as a prominent critic of natural kratom but provided limited information about his professional relationships in the addiction treatment field.

Kolodny previously served as Chief Medical Officer of Phoenix House, a national addiction treatment organization. He has supported the development of buprenorphine treatment programs and has served as a paid expert witness in opioid-related litigation.

Those relationships are publicly documented.

The AKA is not asserting that Kolodny has any continued undisclosed financial interest in Suboxone's manufacturer or in promoting its products. It is asking why his relevant professional and compensated activities did not receive the same degree of examination applied to kratom-associated researchers and advocates.

"Dr. Kolodny is entitled to his opinions. But when *60 Minutes* questions the credibility of people who support natural kratom because of their industry relationships, the program should apply comparable disclosure standards to experts who oppose it," Haddow said.

"Credibility requires consistent standards, not selective scrutiny."

CBS Made a Tenfold Error in Describing the DEA Scheduling Proposal

The AKA further identified a clear factual error in the broadcast's statement that the federal government increased the permitted 7-OH concentration by 20-fold.

The original DEA concentration threshold was 0.5 milligrams per gram. The revised October threshold is 1 milligram per gram.

That is a twofold increase — not twentyfold.

The program also failed to adequately explain that the revised DEA proposal counts 7-OH and MGPI together under a single concentration limit and adds an independent requirement that the ratio of mitragynine to the combined opioid-active compounds must not fall below 100-to-1.

Failure of either proposed requirement would trigger Schedule I controls.

The AKA provided these facts to CBS four days before the broadcast.

"The mathematical error is serious. But the failure to explain the actual two-part scheduling rule is even more consequential because it distorted the public's understanding of what the federal government proposed," Haddow said.

Critics Received Extensive Airtime While AKA's Detailed Written Response Was Reduced to a Passing Reference

CBS contacted the AKA on November 6 with five questions concerning kratom policy, lobbying, and political influence.

The Association responded in an eight-page letter on November 11 and expressed interest in participating in an on-air interview.

No such AKA interview appeared in the broadcast.

Instead, critics received extensive speaking opportunities while the AKA's substantive written response was largely absent.

The program also highlighted Haddow's decades-old ethics convictions while presenting an edited excerpt of his congressional testimony concerning the absence of an established lethal dose of natural botanical kratom.

The AKA is requesting review of the complete footage and the context of those statements.

"*60 Minutes* questioned our credibility while declining to give viewers a comparable opportunity to hear our explanations directly," Haddow said.

"When a program directly attacks an organization's credibility, it should not treat a detailed written response as merely a procedural formality."

AKA Demands Corrections, an Editorial Review, and an On-Air Opportunity to Respond

The Association's formal letter requests that CBS:

- Correct the erroneous 20-fold statement and explain the complete DEA scheduling framework.

- Address NMS Labs' advisory and the limitations of historical mitragynine-only forensic testing.
- Explain why NIH's June 1 announcement concerning mitragynine research was omitted.
- Review the treatment of lobbying expenditures and the disclosure of relevant relationships involving interview subjects.
- Clarify the distinction between kratom-associated deaths and deaths proven to involve natural botanical kratom as a causal factor.
- Publish the AKA's complete November 11 response and provide a meaningful opportunity for an on-air interview.

The AKA is also requesting that CBS review the broadcast's characterization of FDA Import Alert 54-15 and the full context of edited statements attributed to its representatives.

"The credibility of *60 Minutes* will ultimately be measured by what it does now that these factual errors and omissions have been brought directly to its attention," Haddow concluded.

"Families deserve accurate forensic science. Consumers deserve truthful information. Policymakers deserve a complete explanation of federal regulations. And the American public deserves an investigative news program that follows the evidence even when the evidence complicates its narrative."

"CBS News should correct the record, explain what happened in its editorial review, and demonstrate that *60 Minutes* holds itself to the same standards of accuracy, transparency, and accountability that it demands from everyone else."

Principal Supporting Sources

CBS News, November 15, 2026:
https://www.cbsnews.com/news/kratom-60-minutes-transcript/

NMS Labs — Rethinking Kratom Testing:
https://nmslabs.com/resources/educational-resources/blogs-0/mitragynine-alone-no-longer-tells-story-rethinking-kratom-testing

NIH — June 1, 2026, Mitragynine Research Announcement:
https://beta.nih.gov/news-and-media/news/nih-research-clears-way-study-experimental-treatment-opioid-use-disorder

DEA — October 14, 2026, Federal Register Notice:
https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2026-20943

Eccarius et al., Journal of Analytical Toxicology (2026):
https://doi.org/10.1093/jat/bkag090

About the American Kratom Association

The American Kratom Association is a consumer advocacy organization committed to protecting access to safe, natural kratom leaf products and advancing science-based consumer protection standards. AKA supports age restrictions, accurate labeling, contaminant testing, good manufacturing practices, and strong enforcement against adulterated, mislabeled, synthetic, semi-synthetic, concentrated, fortified, or chemically manipulated products falsely marketed as kratom.