



“Committed Service and
Responsiveness”

OFFICE OF THE CORONER COUNTY OF CHESTER

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For Immediate Release

Coroner’s Office reports Kratom-associated Deaths

August 20, 2018

The Chester County Coroner’s Office is reporting two deaths attributed to mitragynine toxicity.

Ryan Jones of Caln Township died 4/30/2018 with the cause of death determined to be mitragynine toxicity with hypertensive cardiovascular disease as a contributing condition. Caleb Jonathan Sturgis of West Bradford Township died 6/27/2018 of acute mitragynine intoxication. The manner of death was accidental in both cases.

According to the American Chemical Society, “mitragynine is the predominant alkaloid produced by the southeastern Asian plant *Mitragyna speciosa*...” *M. speciosa* is commonly known as kratom and remains legal to buy and use in Pennsylvania. It is unregulated although both the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) have expressed concerns. In a 5/22/2018 press release, the FDA

“... continues to warn consumers not to use any products labeled as containing the botanical substance kratom or its psychoactive compounds, mitragynine and 7-hydroxymitragynine. The FDA encourages more research to better understand kratom’s safety profile, including the use of kratom combined with other drugs.”

Dr. Christina VandePol, Chester County Coroner, said “Unfortunately, there is little research available on kratom. These deaths obviously raise our level of concern, however, and I encourage health care providers to be on the alert for its use in our community.”

Approved for release

Christina VandePol, M.D.