

## Green Miracles: Cannabis and Kratom's Potential for Healing and The Industry in Malaysia

Global Cannabis market size was valued at USD 14154.75 million in 2023 and is expected to expand at a CAGR of 17.17% during the forecast period, reaching USD 36619.44 million by 2031.<sup>1</sup> While Kratom on the other hand valued at USD 1.87 Billion in 2023 and is expected to grow at a CAGR of 17.2 percent from 2024–2030 to reach USD 5.69 Billion based on MMR.<sup>2</sup> Cannabis and kratom have emerged as subjects of increasing interest due to their potential industrial applications and therapeutic properties. As the global perception of these substances evolves, exploring their significance in Malaysia's context is vital. Furthermore, as Malaysia continues to diversify its economy and explore new avenues for growth, tapping into the expanding global cannabis and kratom markets presents an opportunity for economic expansion and job creation. This writing aims to delve into the industrial strategical way and potential of cannabis and kratom, and their role in advancing treatments within Malaysia.



Figure 2: Numbers of condition in clinical trial conduct on cannabis and kratom in 2023 based on clinicaltrial.gov

According to data from clinicaltrial.gov website, in 2023 as per portrayed in Figure 1, America led in conducting trials on cannabis and kratom, followed by Europe, Oceania and Asia, which showed the least activity in this area. The clinical trial data from the platform indicates that the most prevalent condition being studied in relation to cannabis and kratom is pain, underscoring the significance of research in addressing this area of medical need. This emphasizes the importance for Malaysia to actively engage in research initiatives exploring the potential therapeutic effects of cannabis and kratom, particularly in addressing pain management within the local population. In addition to its potential in pain management, research into the therapeutic effects of cannabis and kratom has also shown promising results in addressing other medical conditions such as anxiety, depression and neurological disorders.

In order for Malaysia to effectively utilise the industrial potential and therapeutic advancements associated with cannabis and kratom, it is crucial to adopt an approach that is both informed and regulated. Establishing a comprehensive regulatory framework to govern cultivation, processing, and use is crucial. Furthermore, dedicated research initiatives, collaborations, and funding are necessary to explore these substances' potential fully. In 2021, the contentious use of certain drug ingredients was brought to the forefront by the former Health Minister, Mr Khairy Jamaludin. He emphasized the potential of cannabis and kratom, highlighting that these plants are locally accessible yet not fully utilised. Consequently, NPRA approved cannabis, kratom, and related ingredients for clinical trial use, as reported in the news in 2021. However, this approval was limited solely to end products. Table 1 shows a list of clinical studies in Malaysia on cannabis and kratom, indicating that the number of these trials should be increased in the future to align with market demand. Moreover, Malaysia's diverse population and rich cultural heritage present unique opportunities for conducting ethnopharmacological studies on cannabis and kratom. Ny collaborating with local communities and traditional healers, Malaysia can leverage indigenous knowledge to inform scientific research and develop culturally sensitive healthcare

Kratom, an herb native to Southeast Asia, including Malaysia, presents promising industrial prospects. Its alkaloids, particularly mitragynine, have drawn attention to their potential pharmaceutical applications. The herb's properties show promise in herbal supplements and cosmetics, potentially expanding Malaysia's industrial landscape. Cultivating kratom could not only contribute to economic growth but also foster a thriving domestic industry. The therapeutic potential of cannabis and kratom extends beyond their industrial uses. Cannabis derivatives, notably CBD (cannabidiol), exhibit promise in managing various medical conditions. From alleviating chronic pain to assisting in anxiety and epilepsy treatment,<sup>3</sup> ongoing research showcases its potential as a therapeutic agent. Similarly, kratom's alkaloids have been studied for their potential in managing pain and aiding in opioid addiction treatment.<sup>4,5</sup> This is supported by a clinical trial conducted back in 2020 which reported significant pain tolerance increased 1 hour after kratom ingestion.<sup>6</sup> Exploring these treatments could revolutionise healthcare practices in Malaysia.

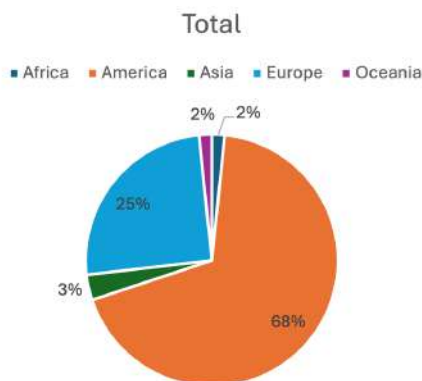


Figure 1: Numbers of studies in regions that conducted trial on cannabis and kratom in 2023 based on clinicaltrial.gov



interventions. This approach not only enhances the relevance and applicability of research findings but also fosters inclusivity and equity in healthcare delivery.

Number of Studies	Type of Studies
3	Review
4	Observational
1	Case Report
1	Clinical Trial

Table 1: List of Clinical Studies on Cannabis and Kratom conducted in Malaysia based on NMRR website and Clinical Trial.Gov

To initiate awareness in Malaysia, similar strategic avenues as Thailand could be pursued; Firstly, the exploration of legislative amendments to permit controlled medical research and supervised usage of cannabis and kratom under stringent regulations.<sup>7</sup> Subsequently, the establishment of a consumption ensures strict adherence to quality and safety benchmarks. Encouraging collaborative research among institutions, universities, and medical entities to conduct comprehensive studies on the therapeutic potentials of cannabis and kratom. In addition, invest in developing a supportive healthcare infrastructure equipped to handle the med policy. Lastly, the launch of comprehensive public education campaigns aimed at emphasizing both the advantages and risks associated with these substances, engaging healthcare professionals, policymakers, and the wider public to facilitate well-informed discussions.

Conclusion, cannabis and kratom hold immense potential in Malaysia, not only industrially but also in healthcare advancements. Exploring their significance requires a balanced approach that leverages their industrial utility while ensuring responsible usage in treatment. Malaysia stands poised to benefit from these resources by fostering innovation, economic growth, and advancements in healthcare. Therefore, stakeholders and authorities must materialise this concept to ensure the regulation and exploration of the potential 'gems' within Malaysia, particularly the underutilised valuable local herbs. Malaysia has recently explored collaboration with Thailand on this matter, and now various stakeholders,

including players in the clinical trial and pharmaceutical industries, along with healthcare authorities, should collaborate to turn this vision into reality.

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