

## **Lingua Inglese - Scientifica**

### **ESEMPIO DI COMPrensIONE SCRITTA**

#### **Livello B2**

#### **Argomento: A comparison of kava with conventional anxiolytics** ***Il medicamento naturale kava versus altri farmaci tradizionali***

*You have 20 minutes to read the passage and answer the questions. The answers must be based exclusively on the information given in the passage, and not on opinions and logic and/or individual knowledge. There is only one right answer.*

Until today, kava was considered to be a herb of limited Polynesian indigenous consumption as a social beverage. Today, it is a popular herbal remedy for anxiety and the stresses of our modern lifestyle. From 1990 to 1997, kava sales in the U.S. increased by an astounding 473%. Part of the reason for kava's popularity lies in its unique properties. Studies show that it induces a state of relaxation without interfering with cognition, memory, or alertness. Neither does it produce tolerance or dependence, unlike many prescription anxiolytics. This article compares kava with conventional treatments for anxiety. Once again, clinical studies show that unlike most prescription anxiolytics, kava does not seem to impair mental functioning and may even improve it.

Anti-anxiety medications such as barbiturates and most benzodiazepines may cause drowsiness or impair cognitive or motor functions. To avoid such adverse effects some people might decide to try out a herbal remedy instead of continuing to take their usual prescription drugs. How easy is it to make such a switch? Research indicates that only a few patients taking benzodiazepines such as Xanax manage to successfully change to kava. Those who wish to try it must first gradually stop anti-anxiety medications under doctor's supervision rather than overlapping treatments. However, the transition from buspirone to kava can generally be undertaken without difficulty under the guidance of a physician.

St. John's wort is a plant often used to treat mild depression. Just as anti-depressants are often combined with anti-anxiety medications in the treatment of anxiety, St. John's wort/kava combinations are recommended by many herbalists to combat this problem. While the safety of this combination treatment has not so far been established, there have been no reports of undesirable reactions. Similarly, kava is frequently combined with other herbal tranquilizers, such as valerian, hops, and passionflower, without apparent adverse consequences. However, no serious research has yet been carried out on the combining of kava with medications or other herbs.

Kava has become the subject of scientific research only fairly recently. Although the research on comparisons between the effectiveness of kava and of benzodiazepine drugs show that they are roughly equivalent, few clinicians would agree that kava is equally as effective as benzodiazepines. In comparing the side-effects of kava and benzodiazepines, research shows that kava does not cause drowsiness or impair cognitive or motor functions – unlike other herbal remedies such as valerian. In fact, kava has been shown to improve mood, well-being, and drive. It is well to remember however, that it is best to gradually stop prescription medications under the guidance of a physician before starting kava.

*(431 words)*

*Source: Summary of chapter from Kava and Anxiety, by C. Gauds, RPh*

*From website of Association of Natural Medicine Pharmacists website*

[www.anmp.org/articles.htm](http://www.anmp.org/articles.htm)

**A. In the first paragraph we learn that:**

1. the production of kava is limited to Polynesia.
2. kava is a popular social beverage in the U.S.
3. kava achieved considerable commercial success in the U.S.
4. kava can be obtained on prescription in the U.S.

**B. Studies indicate that one of kava's advantages is that:**

1. it costs less than prescription drugs.
2. it produces only limited tolerance.
3. it relieves anxiety but does not affect memory.
4. it is relaxing despite a mild effect on mental functioning.

**C. The writer explains that if people want to start treatment with kava:**

1. there is no need to stop other treatments.
2. they must be particularly careful if they have been taking benzodiazepines.
3. they must increase the dosage very gradually.
4. they can also continue using buspirone.

**D. The writer states that kava can be combined with other herbs:**

1. although we are not sure whether there may be side effects.
2. unless herbalists recommend some other treatment.
3. and it has been proved that there are no side effects.
4. with the exception of St. John's wort.

**E. Clinicians generally seem to believe that:**

1. kava can be used together with benzodiazepines.
2. kava has more adverse effects than benzodiazepines.
3. kava is more effective than benzodiazepines.
4. kava is less effective than benzodiazepines.

**ANSWER KEY**

**A3 B3 C2 D1 E4**