Should there be mandatory labeling of all food and drinks containing added caffeine?

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Caffeine is the most widely used psychoactive substance and is part of the daily diet of most people, whether they know it or not. Caffeine is being added to more products, including energy drinks and snack foods, with no regulations requiring the amount of caffeine to be included on the product label. Regulatory reform is needed to protect consumers from caffeine-induced harm and to help them make wise dietary choices, say the authors of an article in *Journal of Caffeine Research*.

In "Caffeine Content Labeling: A Missed Opportunity for Promoting Personal and Public Health," Jon Kole, MD, MBE, Rhode Island Hospital/Bradley Hospital and Brown University (Providence), and Anne Barnhill, PhD, Perelman School of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia), call on the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to require all consumable products to include the amount of any added caffeine on their labels.

Caffeine consumption by children and adolescents is a growing concern. While there are FDA-imposed limits on the quantities of caffeine that can be added to sodas, limits are not in place for other foods or beverages. Added caffeine is increasingly common in foods that might appeal to younger age groups, including in gums, jelly beans, potato chips, beef jerky, and waffles.

"The article by Kole and Barnhill is the latest in a crescendo of calls from the public, politicians, and the scientific community for the FDA to act in relation to caffeine-labeling policy," says Jack E. James, PhD,

Editor-in-Chief of *Journal of Caffeine Research*. "The FDA has responded by announcing that it is considering the situation. However, the question now is not whether the FDA will take action to redress anomalies and inconsistencies in caffeine-labeling policy, but when it will act and how effective that action will be. Public interest demands that the action taken be both swift and effective. This article gives important leads as to how the FDA should proceed."

More information: Kole, J. and Barnhill, A. Caffeine Content Labeling: A Missed Opportunity for Promoting Personal and Public Health, *Journal of Caffeine Research*, September 2013, 3(3): 108-113. DOI: 10.1089/jcr.2013.0017

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