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## Mass Caffeination

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# Mass Caffeination

## **Abstract**

This poem reflects on caffeine intake in modern society from the perspective of a pharmacologist. It is a free verse, concrete poem that communicates the science of caffeine through both words and visual images.

## **Author/Artist Bio**

Michael J Leach is a statistician, health researcher, and poet with a PhD in Pharmacy and a keen interest in STEAM. Michael works at the Loddon Mallee Integrated Cancer Service, Bendigo Health and undertakes research through Monash University School of Rural Health. His poems have appeared in medical journals, including the Medical Journal of Australia and Medical Humanities, as well as literary journals, including Cordite Poetry Review and Meniscus Literary Journal. He lives in his hometown of Bendigo, Australia.

## **Keywords**

Pharmacology, pharmacodynamics, botany, caffeine, poetry

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## **Mass Caffeination**

*Michael J. Leach*

Here in this open  
-air sanctuary  
of societal approval,  
we observe  
or partake in  
the mass consumption  
of a certain readily available  
psychostimulant.

Our daily routines  
feature the regular  
infusion and dissolution  
of certain botanicals  
into hot water,  
giving bitter brews  
that one may choose  
to sweeten  
(naturally  
or otherwise).

When one consumes  
the aromatic  
tea of Southwest China/  
cocoa of Central America/  
coffee of Northeast Africa,  
one is in fact  
casually taking  
a non-prescription drug:  
a xanthine  
called caffeine.  
So it may pay

for us to know something  
of caffeine's pharmacodynamics.

After absorbing  
thru the small intestine,  
flowing in the blood

s  
t  
r  
e  
a  
m

and crossing  
the blood-----brain barrier,  
the

C  
C Y  
I C  
L

molecules  
of caffeine  
bind to adenosine  
receptors in the brain.  
This process,  
known as antagonism,  
prevents adenosine  
(an endogenous protein)  
from locking  
into its binding  
sites and eliciting  
its natural effect –  
CNS depression.  
Thus,

at approximately  
an hour post-consumption,  
the caffeine reaches  
sufficiently high  
blood plasma concentrations  
to effectively  
fight fatigue  
and focus the faculties.

We can take a  
pharmacological view  
of coffee/cocoa/tea  
as, essentially, just a vehicle  
for a popular chemical –  
that dependable xanthine  
that gives a welcome buzz.

We're as free  
as cathemeral owls  
to reap the benefits  
of one of the few  
legally non-prescription  
performance-enhancing drugs.