

The Patriot-News

FDA shouldn't ban e-cigarettes: PennLive letters

Letters to the Editor (As I see it) on January 11, 2017 at 3:00 PM, updated January 11, 2017 at 3:02 PM

Surprisingly, the FDA's finalized regulations that will ban the sale of all currently marketed vapor products on August 8, 2018 will actually threaten the lives of millions of vapers and tens of millions of smokers. Electronic cigarettes could be the best harm reduction strategy we've seen in quitting tobacco use since--well cold turkey.

Government regulators understandably are worried about flavorings in e-cigarettes, but the "flavorings" are ubiquitous in many of our consumable products. They cite animal experiments that claim nicotine can alter development of the cerebral cortex and the hippocampus in adolescents. There are no human studies supporting either assertion, however, and the basic science literature does not corroborate worry about nicotine (available over-the-counter, in patches and in gum).

That's why we recoil when commentators incessantly claim that more studies are needed before vaping e-cigarettes could be deemed safe. Enough is known about health risks with nicotine to issue reasonable and responsible warnings. Vaping is a far less harmful alternative to smoking tobacco because, unlike cigarettes, they do not rely on combustion, which leads to inhalation of deadly gaseous and particulate carcinogens.

Cessation programs have not achieved sustained remissions; thus much effort is placed on harm reduction and vaping is uniquely designed to achieve harm reduction. Because smoking is physically and psychologically addictive, vaping satisfies both needs by mirroring the ritual of handling a nicotine-delivery device. All this but with negligible harm.

Heavy handed regulation of electronic cigarettes-- as if it is a wolf in sheep's clothing-- is not justified by biomedical and behavior sciences. Recent reports related to the energy source may need further review.

Rather than becoming banned or excessively regulated by government, vaping should be recognized as a public health measure that helps smokers quit and reduce smoking.

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To Vape or Not to Vape?

Robert Sklaroff, Bill Godshall, & Stephen Gambescia

Initial and strong arguments against smoking control measures warn the public of “slippery slope,” “mission creep,” or Draconian effects. Such charges are now peculiarly fair to make for what health groups, government regulators, and even the Surgeon General advise doing to electronic cigarettes.

The use of cigarettes has dropped below 40 million Americans for the first time in 50 years, but too many hard-core adult-smokers remain addicted and teens continue to provide steady, though decreasing, cohorts of replacement smokers.

Over the years clinicians, behavioral scientists, and researchers have offered a sundry of ways for addicted smokers to cut down on, or ideally, quit smoking. Truth be told, these ways have had humbling success.

While not an elixir, a smoking abatement kit has come along in the form of electronic cigarettes that satisfies the addiction by delivering nicotine, but reduces the harm from the score of health compromising ingredients in cigarettes and cigars.

E-cigs deliver neither cancer-causing tar nor artery-clogging carbon-monoxide. Millions of addicted smokers have switched to vaping which gives immediate harm reeducation benefit; and there is no evidence to prove they are a gateway to smoking cigarettes.

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