

E-Cigarette Debate Reignites With New Vaping Report

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via Good Morning America

British researchers say electronic cigarettes could save 6,000 lives per year for every million smokers, a claim that has reignited the debate over the health impact of vaping.

In an editorial published British Journal of General Practice, the research team from University London College argued that the public health community was jumping the gun in their rush to regulate e-cigarettes the same as tobacco products.

“Given that smokers smoke primarily for the nicotine but die primarily from the tar, one might imagine that e-cigarettes would be welcomed as a means to prevent much of the death and suffering caused by cigarettes,” they wrote.

The editorial adds to a growing controversy in the scientific community about the safety of e-cigarettes. Just last week the World Health Organization called for a ban on e-cigarettes in public spaces – a move endorsed by more than a dozen public health groups calling for tighter regulations of “vaping” products.

But in an open letter to the WHO back in May, more than 50 researchers cautioned against overregulation, asking the organization to “resist the urge to control and suppress e-cigarettes.” The devices could be a significant health innovation and classifying them as tobacco will do more harm than good, the letter stated.

But the science on e-cigs as a smoking cessation tool is mixed. Earlier this year, the UCL team found that smokers were about 60 percent more likely to quit if they used e-cigarettes. But other studies have found that smokers who switched to e-cigarettes were less likely or no more likely to quit than if they used a patch or gum.

Perhaps most alarmingly, a recent study from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found e-cigarette use among school age children has tripled in the last three years, with half of kids who report vaping stating that they intended to smoke conventional cigarettes within the next year.

A second editorial published today in The Lancet concluded that there isn’t enough evidence to claim e-cigarettes are safe or that they reduce levels of tobacco use.

“A credible case can therefore be made that, unless reliable evidence shows e-cigarettes to be effective cessation aids, there is little justification for their sale,” the editorial reads.

Many major health groups have expressed concerns over the rising use of e-cigarettes. Last week, The American Lung Association along with nearly twenty other public health organizations issued comments to the Food and Drug Administration, urging the agency to speed up the

oversight process of vaping products.

“E-cigarettes are guilty until proven innocent, said Erika Sward the assistant vice president of the American Lung Association said, adding that regulation can’t come soon enough.

“For instance, we don’t know if people who use them would otherwise quit smoking altogether or if they eventually lead them back to using tobacco,” she added. “There are too many things about the medium and long term health effects we simply don’t know about yet know.”

Dr. Leonard Lichtenfeld, the deputy chief medical officer for the American Cancer Society, said “we cannot forget the lessons of the past where modified cigarettes were supposed to be less harmful and instead created greater harm.”

“We’re not trying to predict the future but we need to step back and understand the potential benefits and possible risks of e-cigarettes,” he said. “What we need is well done research and high quality evidence to answer the fundamental questions about the health risk of e-cigarettes and their role in smoking cessation.”