

Individual Write-Up #1 E-cigarettes – Lizette Romano

Prompt: Briefly discuss the public health benefits and risks of e-cigarettes. In your opinion, should e-cigarettes be regulated? Why or why not?

E-cigarettes could have a public health benefit if used as a cessation device for current tobacco smokers. E-cigarettes can help smokers mimic the motions of smoking at a more controlled nicotine level. E-cigarettes can help smokers gradually decrease their nicotine intake and quit smoking once they are accustomed to no longer needing nicotine. To market e-cigarettes as a cessation device, e-cigarettes would need to be regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). If used as a cessation device, regulations would reduce the general public's access to e-cigarettes. This would allow the FDA to determine if e-cigarettes are effective as a cessation device as well as decreasing the number of new e-cigarette users.

On the other hand, the lack of regulations around e-cigarettes has led to an increase in youth smokers. Because of the marketed flavors for e-cigarettes, youth see e-cigarettes as a fun, appealing, and safe alternative to smoking tobacco. Advertising has directly targeted youth by making e-cigarettes look like USB devices that can be hidden from parents easily. Youth are using e-cigarettes at younger ages as they become common among peers. Since e-cigarettes are not regulated, they can contain nicotine even if they advertise that they have no nicotine (Office on Smoking and Health, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2021). Nicotine can harm the brain and lead to a lifetime of addiction as can be seen by how difficult it is for tobacco users to quit cigarettes. The rise of e-cigarettes has the potential to decrease the gains that had been made in preventing youth from smoking tobacco. As youth try nicotine in e-cigarettes, they are also more likely to experiment with tobacco (Office on Smoking and Health, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2021).

As mentioned by Dr. Cowgill (Jan. 6, 2022), e-cigarettes did not have an age limit when they were first released and did not have any advertising limits. This led to targeted advertising that promoted e-cigarettes among youth and effectively increased the number of youth e-cigarette users. E-cigarettes should be regulated to decrease usage among youth. Since youth are more responsive to price increases (Cowgill, Jan. 18, 2022), e-cigarettes should be regulated through increased taxes. E-cigarettes have been marketed as being more affordable than cigarettes so increasing prices will help deter youth from wanting to try e-cigarettes.

E-cigarettes should be regulated since they can release harmful chemical compounds into the air (Cole, Jan. 11, 2022). There is limited regulation around where vaping is allowed. Given how easy it is to hide vaping tools, vape smoke can be experienced in many places that have already banned tobacco smoking. E-cigarettes should be regulated like tobacco smoke is regulated due to the volatile organic compounds released from vape smoke. "No smoking" signs should be updated to include vaping. Including vaping in no-smoking signs will send the message to people considering starting to vape that vaping should be seen as something just as harmful as smoking. Regulations would also allow for vape smoke to be concentrated into areas that are designated for smoking, rather than exposing people broadly to vape smoke.

Reducing pollution from vapes would especially help people with health conditions that make them susceptible to poor air quality, such as those with asthma (Global Allergy and Airways Patient Platform, 2021).

References

Global Allergy and Airways Patient Platform. (2021). *Smoking and Vaping with Asthma: Causes, Triggers and More*. Retrieved from <https://gaapp.org/smoking-vaping-asthma/>

Office on Smoking and Health, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (2021). *Quick Facts on the Risks of E-cigarettes for Kids, Teens, and Young Adults*. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/Quick-Facts-on-the-Risks-of-E-cigarettes-for-Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults.html#:~:text=1%20Many%20young%20people%20who%20use%20e-cigarettes%20also,they%20do%20not%20progress%20to%20future%20cigarette%20smoking.