

April 16, 2015 | By Yadira Galindo

Smokers Who Use E-Cigarettes Less Likely to Quit

Study rebuts contention that devices assist tobacco cessation

The rapid increase in use of e-cigarettes has led to heated debates between opponents who question the safety of these devices and proponents who claim the battery-operated products are a useful cessation tool. A study, published online on April 16 in the *American Journal of Public Health*, suggests proponents are in error.

University of California, San Diego School of Medicine researchers found that smokers who used e-cigarettes were 49 percent less likely to decrease cigarette use and 59 percent less likely to quit smoking compared to smokers who never used e-cigarettes. The population-based study followed 1,000 California smokers over the course of one year.

“Based on the idea that smokers use e-cigarettes to quit smoking, we hypothesized that smokers who used these products would be more successful in quitting,” said Wael Al-Delaimy, MD, PhD, professor and chief of the Division of Global Public Health in the Department of Family Medicine and Public Health. “But the research revealed the contrary. We need further studies to answer why they cannot quit. One hypothesis is that smokers are receiving an increase in nicotine dose by using e-cigarettes.”

Although e-cigarettes do not contain tobacco, users, known colloquially as “vapers,” exhale a mixture of volatile organic compounds, heavy metals and ultrafine particles that usually contain aerosolized nicotine in a cloud of vapor.

The findings show that daily smokers and women were more likely to have tried e-cigarettes. Al-Delaimy believes the study will inform the United States Food and Drug Administration and other regulators on the profile of e-cigarette usage among smokers as they create guidelines for e-cigarettes amid continued discussion about product safety and its attraction to people who have never used traditional cigarettes.

In January, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) released the *State Health Officer's Report on E-Cigarettes*, a health advisory that addressed the health risks posed by the marketing, sale and use of e-cigarettes.

“There is a lot of misinformation about e-cigarettes,” said CDPH director and state health officer, Ron Chapman, MD, MPH. “That is why, as the state’s health officer, I am advising Californians to avoid the use of e-cigarettes and keep them away from children of all ages.”

Co-authors include Eric C. Leas and David R. Strong, UCSD; Mark G. Myers, UCSD and Veterans Affairs San Diego Healthcare System; and C. Richard Hofstetter, San Diego State University.

Funding for this research came, in part, from the California Department of Public Health (12-10046).

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