

# Vaping & E-cigarettes

## Editorial

Smoking tobacco remains the single-biggest cause of preventable death in the United States, killing more than 480,000 citizens a year, and many healthcare professionals and researchers believe that e-cigarettes, which deliver the nicotine but not the dangerous tar and other known chemicals, are likely to be less harmful than traditional cigarettes, however so little is known about the actual variety of chemicals and byproducts in these unregulated devices—that the real harm may not be known or understood for decades. In the meantime they potentially are gaining use and placing customers in harm's way.

It is worth noting that the emergence of vaping comes at a time when traditional tobacco use in the USA is declining among teenagers. It is unfortunately being replaced by vaping, or e-cigarette use. In fact, use of e-cigarettes among middle and high school students has reportedly tripled from 2013 to 2014, according to federal data released recently by the CDC, bringing the share of high school students who use them to 13 percent. This is much higher than what teens reported they smoked of traditional cigarettes. The question now becomes, is we simply allowing our young people to trade one dangerous habit for another, or are e-cigarettes simply a safer nicotine delivery system?

At this time in the USA, approximately one in four high school students and 8 percent of middle school students—4.6 million young people altogether—reportedly used tobacco in some form in 2014. The sharp rise of vaping, together with a substantial increase in the use of other devices, like hookah pipes, led to 400,000 additional young people consuming a tobacco product in 2014. This is the first increase in years, although researchers point out the percentage of this rise fell within the report's margin of error—so it may be an even trade off, but is it?

While some report that they used vaping as a means of weaning off of more traditional cigarette use, crediting e-cigarettes as a “safer alternative”, others are attracted to it because of the novel nature of the devices, as well as the delayed regulation—which has enabled many to still “smoke” despite stringent anti-tobacco rules being enforced in many jurisdictions, nationwide. The fact remains that the manufacturers of these devices are offering a wide variety of flavors, and liquid preparations that clearly are aimed at children and their appetites for sweetened and more aromatic flavorings and options—all well-defined techniques no longer allowed by the tobacco companies here in the USA. They are also using flashy light effects and others means of device and flavor personalization of these devices, that they can increasingly appeal to a wider range of young men and women, as well as middle-schoolers and adults.

E-cigarette use continues to grow exponentially, from very small numbers to now amounts that are increasingly alarming and hard to ignore. In fact, last year's rise, which was recently reported by the Centers for Disease Control, in their annual youth tobacco survey of 20,000 schoolchildren found that e-cigarette use has now risen above that of traditional cigarettes, prompting an outcry from anti-tobacco groups and the health care community. This worrisome trend of

Volume 2 Issue 5 - 2015

Alan H Cohen

Stanford University School of Medicine, USA

**Correspondence:** Alan H Cohen, Stanford University School of Medicine, 2401 Sharon Oaks Drive, Menlo Park, CA94025, USA, Tel (650) 233-9297,

Email [alanhcohen@comcast.net](mailto:alanhcohen@comcast.net) [loriellencohen@gmail.com](mailto:loriellencohen@gmail.com)

**Received:** April 04, 2015 | **Published:** April 29, 2015

increasing e-cigarette use, particularly in the under 18 year old school-aged population were running counter to prior years of successful decline and was now undoing years of progress among the country's most vulnerable population by making smoking, albeit flame free “normal, acceptable and “cool” once again—while introducing an addictive substance like nicotine, to a new audience of vulnerable young people.

So the question now remains, is vaping or e-cigarette use a safe replacement for more traditional tobacco use, via the inhalation of burning tobacco leaves as cigarettes, cigars and hookah's—or is it simply another dangerous alternative pretending to be safer while it proliferates and grows in use, unchecked and poorly regulated in the USA and worldwide? The Food and Drug Administration is presently preparing to issue laws here in the USA that would give them control over e-cigarettes, which has clearly grown enormously uninhibited by any federal oversight. Sales of e-cigarettes more than doubled from 2012 to 2013, to \$1.7 billion, according to Wells Fargo Securities, and in the next decade, consumption of e-cigarettes is expected to easily outstrip that of traditional cigarettes, with bricks and mortar storefronts and web-based companies popping up everywhere, with a clear directive to attract those under 18 years old, as well as vulnerable adults.

Until more is known and understood about the actual chemical make-up of these tobacco alternatives, and some degree of oversight and regulation is employed—the truth is that no one knows what the short and long term consequences are of these products and that it and of itself should make people pause and reconsider their decisions before purchasing an e-cigarette or e-hookah kit and inhaling the liquid contents being offered to them as “safe” and flavored like candy or other substances. What the chemical makeup of these currently unregulated substances is, and what impact they may be actually having on the pulmonary and oral health of all users is simply unknown and unstudied. Until more is understood and closer regulatory control is imposed on these tobacco alternatives, I think it is our duty as healthcare professionals, researchers and parents to

take a collective cautionary stand against their use and more important their seemingly easy access to our young people. For all we know the current generation of “Vapers” will be our next wave of respiratory cripples due to a litany of chemical byproducts and agents we simply don’t know are being used to manufacture these inhalation liquids and are being consumed like the candies and sweets they masquerade to be as innocuous as.

## Acknowledgements

None.

## Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.