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Heart Institute review confirms no evidence of e-cigarettes effectiveness for cessation

OTTAWA, September 24, 2013 – A recent literature analysis from the University of Ottawa heart Institute (UOHI) on the use of e-cigarettes in Canada still shows no evidence that e-cigarettes used by smokers who are trying to quit is an effective method of smoking cessation. The review, published this week in the [Canadian Medical Association Journal](#), states 5 important facts Canadian physicians should keep in mind when advising patient on smoking cessation methods.

Electronic (e-) cigarettes are cigarette-shaped canisters used to simulate the action of cigarette smoking

Batteries within the canisters heat up fluid-filled cartridges that contain varying concentrations of flavouring agents, propylene glycol, glycerine, water and other chemicals. Not all e-cigarettes contain nicotine. The cartridge content varies widely according to the manufacturer and distributor. The act of smoking an e-cigarette is called “vaping,” because the user inhales vapour, not smoke.

E-cigarettes are not regulated or approved for sale in Canada

Although not approved for sale in Canada, e-cigarettes are readily available online and through retail outlets. A recent 4-country survey of current and former smokers showed that 40% of the 1581 Canadians surveyed were aware of e- cigarettes and 10% had tried them. Although the prevalence of cigarette smoking has decreased over the past few decades, consumer interest in e-cigarettes is rising.

Although perceived by cigarette smokers as a safer alternative to tobacco smoking, e-cigarettes have not been evaluated for their safety

It is unknown whether inhalation of the mixture of chemicals found in the vapour of e-cigarettes is safe. Available literature suggests that e-cigarettes contain trace amounts of impurities and carcinogenic tobacco-specific nitrosamines. Concerns exist regarding the potential to maintain nicotine dependency in current smokers or induce addiction in nonsmokers

E-cigarettes have not been fully evaluated for their efficacy as smoking cessation aids

To date, one 6-month randomized controlled trial has investigated the efficacy of nicotine containing e-cigarettes as a smoking cessation aid; statistical power was insufficient to conclude e-cigarettes were superior to nicotine patches.

Effective smoking cessation interventions are available for smokers wishing to quit

Several pharmacologic and behavioural interventions have been found to improve smoking cessation rates (www.cmaj.ca/lookup/suppl/doi:10.1503/cmaj.130806/-/DC1). These strategies help patients manage nicotine withdrawal symptoms, learn behavioural self-regulation skills and provide instrumental social support.

The University of Ottawa Heart Institute “Ottawa Model” for Smoking Cessation (OMSC) is a multi-component intervention for addressing tobacco use with smokers in clinical settings. The OMSC has been designed to integrate existing knowledge regarding behaviour change in clinical settings and evidence-based approaches for smoking cessation. The overarching philosophy of the model is to generate “more supported quit attempts, more often” by systematically providing cessation advice during teachable moments in key clinical settings as part of a population health approach to address cessation.

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