

Vape and the Society: Should it be Encouraged, Discouraged, or Prohibited?

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Vape and the Society: Should it be Encouraged, Discouraged, or Prohibited?

- Vape, also known as electronic cigarette, have become very popular globally especially among young people.
- In some countries vaping has been encouraged even by the health authorities and regarded as less harmful than conventional cigarettes; hence recommended to cigarette smokers for quitting.

- However, such view is not universally accepted.
- Emerging studies demonstrated negative consequences of vaping.
- In Malaysia there is lacuna in law regarding sale and purchase of vape. Subsequently, no protection is afforded to people against the negative impact of vaping.
- To determine whether there should be regulations on vape we need to examine the positive and negative aspects of vaping based on medical and scientific studies.

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Vape and the Society: Should it be Encouraged, Discouraged, or Prohibited?

- This paper examines various arguments and issues concerning vaping so that we could make an informed decision based on the facts and evidence available.
- At the beginning of the paper, vape and cigarette would be explained, followed by a comparison between the two. The distinction between vape and cigarette is made subsequently to provide a comprehensive understanding of the foregoing issues.
- The ensuing discussion is examination of various views in favour of and against vape whereby analyses of different governmental policies and legal regulations by countries on the use of vaping are included.

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The economic and financial factors have propelled the ever-increasing use of vaping among members of society everywhere.

The catalyst for the widespread of vaping could be contributed to approval by some medical authorities of its use.

This is evident in Australia and the UK which allow prescribing of electronic cigarettes as a medical device for conventional cigarette smokers who want to quit via the public health service.

News story
E-cigarettes could be prescribed on the NHS in world first

England could be the first country in the world to prescribe medically licensed e-cigarettes to help reduce smoking rates.

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It is a common belief that e-cigarettes are less harmful to health compared to cigarettes.

While conventional cigarettes contain tobacco and other ingredients like carbon monoxide and tar, vapes use a liquid concoction commonly called juice that usually contains nicotine and other chemicals.

THE EVIDENCE SO FAR SHOWS THAT E-CIGARETTES ARE FAR SAFER THAN SMOKING

- E-cigarettes contain nicotine but not cancer causing tobacco
- Nicotine is addictive, but does not cause cancer
- Tobacco is the biggest cause of preventable death in the UK
Over 100,000 deaths per year = 10,000
- Passively breathing vapour from e-cigarettes is unlikely to be harmful
- Growing evidence shows e-cigarettes are helping people to stop smoking

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According to the Poisons Act 1952, nicotine in e-cigarettes is regulated as a Group C poison. However, such products are sold freely in retail shops in Malaysia.

Alarmingly, it is proven that there is enormous potential harm in electronic cigarettes.

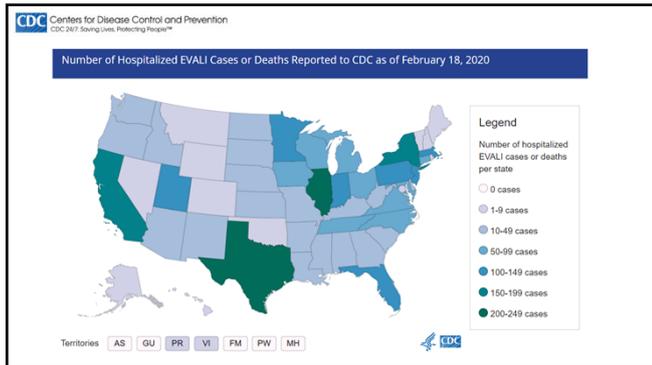
Outbreak of Lung Injury Associated with the Use of E-Cigarette, or Vaping, Products

In October 2019, the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that the outbreak of E-cigarette or Vaping Product Use-Associated Lung Injury (EVALI) grew by more than 200 cases in a week, totaling 1,299.

Health officials said that 29 people died from vaping-related illnesses.

A total of 2,807 cases of EVALI with 68 deaths were reported to the CDC, USA until 18 February 2020.

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In Malaysia, according to the National Poison Centre, since 2015 until August 2022, there were 57 poisoning cases due to vape exposure.

In the 2021 Clinical Practice Guidelines on management of EVALI published by the Malaysian Health Technology Assessment Section (MaHTAS), Ministry of Health Malaysia, it is stated that 'smoking of tobacco and tobacco products (cigarette, electronic cigarette/vape, shisha, pipe, cigar etc.) can lead to various non communicable diseases (NCDs).'

Worldwide, more than eight million people die every year because of this habit.

It is also arguable that vape would lead to cessation of smoking because a lot of people use them as their first tobacco product instead of a method of smoking cessation.

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Consequently, there are opposing opinions on vape and it is an issue being hotly debated in healthcare and policymaking.

The government is responsible to ensure that use of vape is safe to be consumed by the public or prohibit it altogether.

The health of people as consumers must be protected and prioritized over profits.

The safety of the product and effect of the product to health must be determined so that suitable policy and appropriate legal measure could be taken.

There are diverse and competing views as to how vaping should be regulated.

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- Vape or e-cigarette is an electronic device (vaporizer) that aerosolized liquid.
- Generally, it consists of a battery, fuel oil, reservoir or tank and mouthpiece.
- The liquid vapour in the cartridge contains a solvent such as propylene glycol and/or glycerin and flavouring chemicals. Many contain varying levels of nicotine, the same addictive compound found in a cigarette.
- Vaporizer works by heating liquid to form an aerosol that is inhaled through the user's mouth and lungs where it is absorbed into the bloodstream.

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Basic structure of a standard cigarette

- A cigarette is a thin cylinder of tobacco lined with smoking paper.
- Tobacco is a product made from the leaves of *Nicotiana sp.* plants.

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Cigarette

- The tobacco in conventional cigarettes is burned. This creates smoke containing thousands of toxic and carcinogenic chemicals.
- **Nicotine** and other chemicals are already present in *Nicotiana* plants as they grow.
- An additional 600 ingredients can be added during the manufacturing process.
- Cigarette smoke contains nicotine, tar, carbon monoxide and formaldehyde, and anywhere between 4000 to 7000 other chemicals.
- At least 69 of these chemicals are known to cause cancer, and many are toxic.
- **Tar** is a brown sticky substance that builds up in the lungs when cigarette smoke is inhaled. Tar can cause lung cancer and increase the risk of other lung diseases including emphysema and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).
- **Carbon monoxide** is a poisonous gas which can cause oxygen deprivation, leading to heart disease and stroke.

Vape or E-cigarette

- Electronic cigarette works by heating and creating a vapour from the solutions
- Since there is no combustion, there is no smoke.
- It does not contain tobacco but do contain nicotine, propylene glycol, vegetable glycerin and flavourings.
- The vapour does not contain carbon monoxide or tar.
- All medical experts who claim that vaping is less harmful than smoking also admit that that does not mean vape is risk-free.

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- According to UK health authorities, vaping has helped tens of thousands of smokers quit each year.
- However, the World Health Organization says the evidence supporting the use of e-cigarettes as a smoking cessation aid is inconclusive.

There are many different types of e-cigarettes in use, also known as electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) and sometimes electronic non-nicotine delivery systems (ENNDS).



What role do ENDS play in smoking cessation?

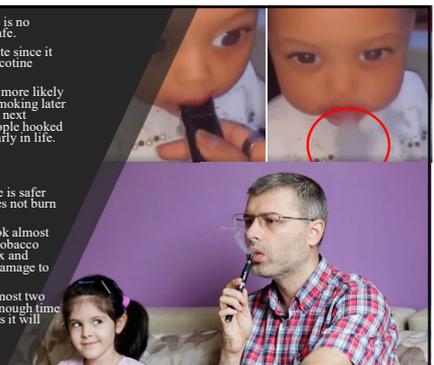
To date, evidence on the use of ENDS as a cessation aid is inconclusive. In part due to the diversity of ENDS products and the low certainty surrounding many studies, the potential for ENDS to play a role as a population-level tobacco cessation intervention is unclear.
- In addition a review made by the Australian National University Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health found there was strong evidence that e-cigarettes increased tobacco smoking uptake in non-smokers, particularly young people, while there was limited evidence that nicotine e-cigarettes help smokers quit cigarettes

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Most people assume that because there is no tobacco burnt in e-cigarette than it is safe.

Vape can be just as addictive as cigarette since it can also rapidly deliver high plasma nicotine concentration.

People who start using e-cigarettes are more likely to use other illegal drugs or continue smoking later in life. So, it could be the source of the next tobacco epidemic by getting young people hooked on nicotine delivered by e-cigarettes early in life.



It has also been claimed that e-cigarette is safer than traditional cigarette because it does not burn anything or deposit tar in the lungs.

Yet, it must be borne in mind that it took almost two centuries before it is realized that tobacco causes lung cancer, cancer of the larynx and mouth, heart attacks and strokes, and damage to the lungs.

Vape has only been around for only almost two decades now. Thus, there hasn't been enough time to determine the real detrimental effects it will have on human health.

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Law and Vape in Malaysia

- The first local study of vape users in Malaysia conducted in 2016 showed an estimated figure of 600,000 current users. Based on the Malaysian National Health and Morbidity Survey 2019 the number of users had increased to 1.1 million.
- In Malaysia, the sale of vape liquids containing nicotine has been banned since 2015.
- Under the Poisons Act 1952 it is illegal for anyone other than a licensed pharmacist or a registered medical, dental or veterinary practitioner, to sell any form of preparation containing nicotine.
- The prohibition includes e- liquids. However, there are no specific regulations governing the sale and use of non-nicotine vaporizers and e-cigarettes. Thus, it is being transacted freely without any regulation.
- Ironically according to a study commissioned by the Malaysian Vape Chamber of Commerce, vape liquids containing nicotine make up about 97% of vape liquid retail sales in Malaysia.

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Law and Vape in Malaysia

- There seems to be a tacit consensus that vape should not be unregulated. Even societies and groups of vape sellers, manufacturers and users are in the agreement that there should be certain kind of legal regulations.
- President of the Malaysian Organization of Vape Entities (MOVE) is of the view that regulations and enforcement on vaping products is the best way to prevent misuse and assure the health and safety of consumers and would benefit consumers and society as a whole. He stressed that the authority must test, approve and provide quality control standards for vape products, ensure proper labelling and information on vaping products for consumption, and strictly enforce rules for vape products and penalize entities that sell products that do not meet standards.
- The Malaysian Vape Consumer Association (VCAM) views that regulating nicotine vapes is critical for consumer protection. Such regulation will ensure that vapes are sold only to mature consumers safely and legally.

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Law and Vape in Malaysia

- These views reiterated concerns made by medical experts based on a study conducted on e-liquid in Malaysia.
- The experts highlight that labelling discrepancy of e-liquids has prompted the crucial need for the implementation of regulation on e-liquid manufacturing and sales particularly on the accuracy of labelling and licensing to protect the public health.
- "Compulsory declaration of the contents by the manufacturer should be enforced to avoid endless cost-ineffective sampling by enforcement agencies. Any contradiction to such self-declared labels should be deemed as non-compliance under the law for deceptive labeling."
- The medical experts further states that in supporting the Tobacco Endgame in Malaysia by 2045, there is an urgency for the government to come out with a legislation related to e-cig and strengthening its existing enforcements to prevent detrimental health effects arising from e-cig usage.

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Law and Vape in Malaysia

- Some are of the views that vape should be prohibited altogether, as what been done in countries like our neighbors; Singapore, Thailand and Brunei.
- The Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) is one of the groups which call for immediate ban of vape. In a survey conducted by the association it was found that children, including girls, from primary and secondary schools, were addicted to vape. It could be purchased easily even by children. It was reported that "there are 8-year-old children who used to smoke cigarettes and are now buying vape devices because of the liquid that is sold in fruit flavors".

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