Views about e-cigarettes among smokers and recent quitters: results from the New Zealand ITC project

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The International Tobacco Control (ITC) Project

- International collaboration currently in 28 countries
- Monitors progress towards FCTC
- Robust cross-country comparable cohort study design
- Coordinated through University of Waterloo, Canada
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Background

• Nicotine containing e-cigarettes (ECs) and e-liquids not legally available for sale in NZ, but can be imported for personal use

• Likely to be made widely available in 2018

• Limited data on awareness, patterns of use, and beliefs and attitudes towards ECs among NZ smokers and EC users
Objectives

• Explore awareness, knowledge, beliefs and attitudes towards e-cigarettes among NZ smokers and recent quitters;
• Discuss implications of findings for practice, policy and research
New Zealand ITC Project

• Cohort recruited from large national health survey (NZHS)
• CATI survey, Wave 1 Sept 2016 – April 2017
  ➢ Follow-up 2018
• 881 smokers & 274 recent quitters
  ➢ 35.2% of invited participants completed at least some of the survey after excluding invalid phone numbers
  ➢ Māori: 320 smokers, 66 recent quitters
• Analysis accounts for over-sampling of some participant groups in the NZHS/ITC sampling stages
• Analysis presented for questions relating to awareness, knowledge and views about e-cigarettes
Have you ever heard of electronic cigarettes, also called e-cigarettes, vapes, or vaping devices?
E-cigarette beliefs: overview

- EC make it easier to quit
- EC might harm health
- EC less harmful than smoking
- EC vapour less harmful than SHS
- Switching to ECs would improve health
- ECs less addictive than smoking

Legend:
- All
- Used in last year
- Not used in last year
E-cigarettes accessibility: e-cigarettes are too expensive
E-cigarettes accessibility: e-cigarettes are too hard to get
In your opinion, should advertising of e-cigarettes and vaping devices be banned everywhere or allowed in some places?

- Banned everywhere
- Allowed in some places
- Don't know

The image shows a bar chart comparing the opinions of different groups on the banning of e-cigarette advertising.
In which ...[places] ...do you think nicotine-containing e-cigarettes and e-liquids should be available in New Zealand?

- 47% ‘Yes’ for ‘in any shops that want so sell these products’
- 86% ‘Ye’s for specialist vaping and e-cigarette shops
Level of Support for 3 proposed e-cigarette policies: NZ ITC survey 2016-17

- Ban ECs where smoking banned
- Same min age for ECs and cigs
- Ban fruit and candy flavour Ecs + E-liquids

Support | Oppose | Don't know
Key findings

• Most participants (especially recent users) had positive views of ECs – e.g. help quit, less harmful than cigarettes
• Most participants (especially regular users) did not think ECs are too expensive
• Most participants did not think ECs are too hard to get
• Mixed views on EC-related policies:
  o Strong support for minimum age for purchase and availability by prescription in pharmacies and specialist shops
  o Mixed views on bans on EC use in smokefree areas and on candy/fruit flavours or availability in all shops
  o Most opposed bans on advertising
Conclusions

• Data quite preliminary, implications debatable, and public opinion of smokers/recent quitters is not the only consideration!

• Some support for more constrained roll out of availability of nicotine-containing ECs and e-liquids i.e.
  • ECs mostly not seen as too hard to get,
  • mixed views on making generally available,
  • very strong support for availability through prescription in pharmacies and in specialist vape shops

• Education about ECs to further increase knowledge of relative health effects of ECs compared to smoked tobacco products may be important to encourage switching

• Bans on flavours – needs careful exploration of policy options

• Minimum age of purchase strongly supported
Kia ora

Thank you

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