

## Letter to the Editor

### Vaping: Benefits Outweigh the Risks

After reading an editorial article entitled *Health Concern in Electronic Cigarettes* by Kongkiat Kunkantharakorn and Somchai Bovornkitti in the *Asian Medical Journal & Alternative Medicine (AMJAM)* volume 21, January-April 2021 issue, pp.5 - 6, I would like to provide additional information harvested from important documents.<sup>1-6</sup>

It is universally known that smoking is a major public health concern as the practice greatly increases the risk of cancer and cardiovascular diseases. Smoking cessation is clearly the best intervention to reduce this risk. However, due to the addictive nature of nicotine found in tobacco products, quitting tobacco use is noted to be very challenging. In recent years, novel cigarettes emerged as an alternative to cigarette smoking. Although the use of these products is growing in several countries around the world, they are prohibited in Thailand. Albeit, using e-cigarette may not entirely risk free, several prominent medical organizations, including the Royal College of Physicians and Public Health England, have advocated the use of these products as a harm reduction strategy. The evidence favors that there are much lower levels of toxicants in e-cigarette vapor or aerosol than in cigarette smoke. Moreover, there are studies showing that the exposure to harmful chemicals of e-cigarette users is less than smokers. At present public health of England support people who smoke switch completely to e-cigarette.

There was news of an outbreak of lung injuries and deaths associated with vaping in August 2019 in the USA. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirmed 68 deaths in patients who used e-cigarette or vaping products. The patients showed associated lung injury or EVALI (As of Feb 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020). The events brought about a hotly debate in healthcare and policy making. Finally, CDC identified vitamin E acetate added to cannabis products as a “primary cause” of the outbreak. CDC and US FDA recommend that people not use THC-containing e-cigarette, or vaping, products, particularly from informal sources. The admission of EVALI cases declined because the increasing of public awareness of the harm associated with products from black market and law enforcement actions related to vitamin E acetate in illicit products. There are rare EVALI cases in the UK because Vitamin E acetate containing e-cigarettes was banned in the UK.

Since e-cigarettes became available in the UK in 2007, using these products has been surrounded by medical and public controversy. Recently, the UK’s Royal College of Physicians (RCP) submits the report “Smoking and health 2021 a coming of age for tobacco control.” This report suggests that electronic cigarettes have the potential to contribute to reducing death and disability caused by smoking. RCP recommends that using e-cigarettes as an aid to stop smoking is significantly less harmful to health than smoking tobacco. In the United Kingdom, e-cigarette is quite limited to smokers while regular use in youth is very low, contrast with the situation in the U.S. The regulation for e-cigarettes in the UK is strict. The products must pass the standards of quality and safety. The benefit to public health occurs to only to smokers completely switch to e-cigarettes and low youth initiation. Therefore, based on the evidence in the UK, it seems that substituting e-cigarettes for tobacco is beneficial to public health.

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