

Is the War On Electronic Cigarettes Legitimate?

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INTRODUCTION

With Los Angeles' move to ban electronic cigarettes from public spaces they could soon be joining Chicago, New York, and others who have restricted the use of this popular and controversial innovation.

E-cigarettes have become a hot topic in the world of tobacco products now that they are becoming more widely used. Advocates argue that E-cigarettes are safe because: they lack the tar and other dangerous chemicals found in regular cigarettes that make smoking dangerous and could help people with addictions to nicotine quit traditional tobacco products. Because e-cigarettes are vaporizers, they do not produce smoke, which might mean that the dangers of any negative second-hand effects are null. However, there hasn't been research on the effects of second-hand "vaping," and it would be best that such studies be undertaken to ensure safety.

ANALYSIS

Unfortunately, those lobbying against e-cigarettes aren't solely concerned with the health risks of the devices. Many are fearful of the possibility for e-cigarettes to become a gateway drug, or at least an innocent way for non-smokers to start before taking up normal cigarettes as well due to nicotine addiction. Also, though e-cigarette marketers are not targeting younger audiences, their usage of words like "e-hookahs" or "vape pens" seem to be shedding a light on e-cigarettes that makes them sound harmless. This could further hook young people and critics are using the fear of creating new smokers to drive their war against e-cigarettes.

Some are fighting back by arguing that the question of whether e-cigarettes are acceptable is no longer based on empirical evidence. While more studies need to be done there is no reason to believe that e-cigarettes will function as a gateway drug, nor is there proof that e-cigarette smokers will start using traditional tobacco products. Instead, there is a claim, forwarded by Will Saletan and Amanda Marcotte of *Slate*, that this war is really the result of cultural anxieties that we as a society have over smoking in general. Ever since Tobacco Companies lied about the harmfulness of smoking in the past society has ostracized smokers

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in its attempts to get rid of smoking entirely. The distaste the U.S. has for smoking is within the public's consciousness – it's acceptable to disapprove of or condemn anyone who smokes.

CONCLUSION

Those who are battling against e-cigarette usage then are following in an old social construct that shames smokers. However, Saletan and Marcotte might say this construct is outdated and should not be used in discussions on the viability of e-cigarette usage.

Amy Fairchild and James Colgrove of the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University have also made comments concerning tolerating e-cigarettes. In their New York Times article they said, "... there is a price to such rigidity. Emotion should not rule out harm reduction, even if eradication of smoking is the ultimate goal." They felt that public banning of vaping would not help reach that goal, but instead focused on FDA regulation of e-cigarettes as the best possible course of action at this time.

The wisest course then seems to be using the FDA to regulate. They wouldn't just serve the purpose of checking quality and safety to protect health concerns, but could be used to regulate advertising and marketing schemes to make sure that younger audiences are not targeted. Perhaps through the FDA more research could also be conducted to ensure the safety of e-cigarette usage.

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