

Tuesday, 21 March 2023

Jury is in on vaping and associated harms — time for action

The jury is in on the harms of vaping, with a new study published in the *Medical Journal of Australia* today providing the most comprehensive review yet on the health impacts of e-cigarettes.

Australian Medical Association President Professor Steve Robson said the findings of the study leave zero room for confusion about the dangers of e-cigarettes and vaping.

“The jury is in — it’s time for stronger, strictly enforced regulations so we can avoid another public health crisis like tobacco,” Professor Robson said.

“Vaping is not harmless, it is not safe, it is not part of tobacco control. It has become a scourge in our schools, with parents and educators reporting that it has got out of hand. And we are seeing adults and children alike suffering as a result of vaping.”

Risks identified in the review include addiction, poisoning, especially in small children, seizures and loss of consciousness caused by nicotine overdose, headache, cough, throat irritation, and burns and injuries, largely caused by exploding batteries.

Another major risk identified by the study was that young non-smokers who use e-cigarettes are around three times as likely to go on to smoke regular cigarettes, compared to young people who did not use e-cigarettes.

In its submission to a Therapeutic Goods Administration consultation on vaping that closed earlier this year, the AMA called for regulations to be changed to limit access to nicotine vaping products (NVPs) by banning the personal importation of NVPs and to reduce the allowed concentration of nicotine. The submission also called for stronger controls on all vaping products through customs.

“We need to address the public health challenge presented by both nicotine and non-nicotine vapes,” Professor Robson said.

“Vaping products are a gateway to smoking for young people and there are significant risks from vaping that warrant much stronger regulation. For example, we know many products marketed as not containing nicotine have been found to contain nicotine and products have also been found to contain prohibited chemicals that can cause serious harm, like vitamin E acetate and diacetyl, which can cause serious damage to the lungs.”

Professor Robson said the AMA wants improved regulation to curb the proliferation of recreational non-nicotine vaping products, including implementing similar regulation to tobacco products, such as health warnings, better labelling, plain packaging, and tobacco licences.

“We also need a targeted federal response to monitor and act on illegal advertising and promotion of e-cigarettes — particularly online and on social media — and improved enforcement of existing state and territory regulation to help block illegal vape sales both online and through shopfronts.”

“Patients with a prescription for an NVP should be able to have the confidence that they are using a product that has passed the safety, quality, and efficacy assessments of the TGA, instead of purchasing an overseas product that hasn’t had to meet Australia’s high quality and safety standards,” Professor Robson said.

The AMA has also proposed reducing the concentration limit allowed under regulations from 100mg/ml to 20mg/ml and introducing limits on the flavours and volume of nicotine that can be prescribed or ordered.

“We would also like to see the government work with state and territory governments to add NVPs to real time prescription monitoring programs and the MBS telehealth smoking cessation items amended so only a patient’s usual doctor can prescribe NVPs to help people stop smoking,” Professor Robson said.

[Read the AMA's submission to the Therapeutic Goods Administration consultation](#)

[Read the study](#)

Contact: AMA Media: +61 427 209 753 | media@ama.com.au

Follow the AMA Media on Twitter: twitter.com/ama_media

Follow the AMA President on Twitter: twitter.com/amapresident

Like the AMA on Facebook facebook.com/AustralianMedicalAssociation