Meeting the novel product/e-cigarette challenge

ERS Position on Tobacco Harm Reduction

Primary Prevention Meeting

European Cancer Organisation (ECO)

28th May 2021

13:00-16:00 CEST

Prof. Jonathan Grigg

ERS Tobacco Control Committee Chair
Novel Products

Heated Tobacco Products

Heated tobacco products consist of a small tobacco stick that is heated electronically, rather than burned.

Electronic Cigarettes

E-cigarettes produce an aerosol by heating a liquid that usually contains nicotine, flavorings, and other chemicals. They help delivering nicotine without tobacco smoke.
Tobacco Harm Reduction

Aims to reduce the adverse health, social and economic consequences of the use of psychoactive drugs without necessarily reducing drug consumption.

Prioritises a public health perspective aiming to stop or reduce immediate harms when at-risks individuals do not respond to treatments.

Harm Reduction Strategy

Recommends the use of alternative nicotine delivery products (e.g., e-cigarettes or heated tobacco) to smokers for their reduced toxicity instead of conventional cigarettes.

Replaces a very harmful product with a less – but still – harmful product.

The concept is intuitive and attractive but slightly more complex in reality.
The ERS position in a nutshell

Tobacco Harm Reduction cannot be recommended as a population-based strategy

New products are not as harmless as commonly believed

New products are not highly effective as smoking-cessation tools

New products are consumer products that are mass-marketeted by the industry

Can have a negative impact on public health and youth in particular

Most smokers want to quit and dislike being nicotine dependent

The Tobacco Epidemic can be curbed without harm reduction
Novel Products & Smoking-Cessation

• Most nicotine-delivery products, including heated tobacco and e-cigarettes are highly addictive.

• Despite claims made by the industry, daily use of e-cigarettes while smoking appears to increase the attempts to stop or reduce smoking, but is not associated with smoking cessation.

• Most persons use alternative nicotine delivery products as a supplement to conventional cigarettes, not as an alternative to smoking.

• We recommend evidence-based tobacco dependence treatments which have proved to be safe and cost-effective.

90% of smokers want to quit

60-80% of e-cigarettes users continue to smoke

BUT
Novel Products & health risks

Independent research is still scarce but increasing evidence shows that novel products are not risk-free for human health and should be further investigated.

Electronic Cigarettes
- Acute Lung Injury (EVALI)
- Increases risk of cardiovascular diseases and lung disorders
- Adverse effects of the development of the fetus
- Potential link with cancer growth and development

Heated Tobacco Products
- Potential risk to damage human bronchial epithelial cells
- Potential risk to increase oxidative stress and inflammation, infections and airway remodeling
- Potential risk to decrease blood vessel function

Nicotine
- Increases the risk of diseases (eg. Diabetes)
- Affects the adolescent’s brain development
- Use during adolescence increases the risk for future addiction to other drugs
- Toxic to developing fetus

Long-term effects are unknown
The lessons of ‘light’ and ‘low-tar’ cigarettes

The story of light cigarettes is a good example of how the industry uses so-called reduced exposure to mislead smokers who want to quit.

- **1960’s**: Public concerns about smoking and health begin to rise.
- **1970-80’s**: Tobacco companies develop ‘light’ and ‘low-tar’ cigarettes and give the perception of a healthier option.
- **90-2000’s**: Long-term evidence shows that ‘light’ and ‘low-tar’ cigarettes do not lower the health risk and sometimes even increases it.

Considering all I’d heard, I decided to either quit or smoke True. I smoke True.
Impact on public health & youth

• Even if novel products turn out to be less harmful, we must consider their impact on the whole population, not only on smokers who represent a minority

• Novel products strongly appeal to children and adolescents, especially to those at low risk of taking up smoking

• E-cigarettes uptake by children and young people has already grown exponentially

1/4 of e-cigarettes users in Australia have never smoked
Novel Products & Marketing

• The tobacco industry applies the same marketing approach to novel products as for conventional cigarettes.

• E-cigarette advertising expenditures, including towards youth, have increased dramatically, and social media are used extensively.

• The tactics include statements about their safeness compared to conventional cigarettes and on their advantages as agents to promote smoking cessation.

• At the same time, the tobacco companies reinvent themselves as concerned and ethical corporations, with initiatives such as Philip Morris Institute for a Tobacco Free World, and the “Foundation for a Smoke-Free World”.
The decline of smoking due to tobacco control is surely one of public health’s greatest successes.

Unlike new products, the below tobacco control policies & programmes applied at a population-level have proved to be effective methods:

- High-prices
- Plain packaging
- Point of sale display ban
- Comprehensive marketing bans
- Anti-smoking campaigns
- Free National smoking cessation services
Content from Philip Morris International

**We are replacing cigarettes with better alternatives**

By 2025, our goal is for smoke-free products to make up more than 50 percent of our net revenue.

“Harm reduction is our common goal. We must cooperate to achieve it as soon as possible.”
The latest study identified seven strategies used by the tobacco industry:

- Promoting untruths
- Postponing regulation
- Playing the victim
- Protesting against regulators
- Playing EC off against Member States
- Preying on third countries
- Pushing new technologies
Conclusion

• ERS cannot recommend any product damaging the lungs and human health

• Novel products remain both harmful and highly addictive and do not help smokers to beat their addiction to nicotine

• Novel products represent a danger for public health, especially for young people

• We should focus on promoting evidence-based and effective regulatory measures to reduce smoking and continue to support smokers who wish to quit