



## LETTERS

## E-CIGARETTES

# Why the rules should not be relaxed for e-cigarettes to encourage people to stop smoking

Michael Craig Watson *associate professor in public health*<sup>1</sup>, John Lloyd *honorary vice president*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Nottingham, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Queen's Medical Centre, Nottingham NG7 2HA, UK; <sup>2</sup>Institute of Health Promotion and Education, Welwyn AL6 0UD, UK

The House of Commons Science and Technology Committee report on e-cigarettes is well worth reading.<sup>1,2</sup> The 98 pieces of published written evidence have been produced by a range of people and organisations, including multinational tobacco companies, vaping organisations, and public health groups.

We are concerned that the report repeats Public Health England's claim that e-cigarettes are 95% less harmful than conventional cigarettes.<sup>3</sup> This will lead some people to think that e-cigarettes are quite safe. But we think it is far too early to devise a figure such as this when there is a lack of evidence on the long term health consequences of e-cigarettes.<sup>4</sup>

Besides safety issues, another important consideration is efficacy of e-cigarettes in helping smokers to reduce consumption or quit altogether. A recent Cochrane review found little evidence that e-cigarettes are an aid to smoking cessation and recommended that further studies are needed.<sup>5</sup> We are therefore concerned that the select committee website states: "E-cigarettes are a proven stop smoking tool."<sup>1</sup>

The report also ignores the evidence that e-cigarettes can act as a gateway to conventional smoking.<sup>6</sup> We are alarmed at the rise in use of Juuls in some countries and worried that they may become a desirable lifestyle choice of young people in this country, as well as a long term serious risk to public health.<sup>7</sup>

Although we agree that smoking still "remains a national health crisis,"<sup>1</sup> we do not think that many of the steps in the report should be actively endorsed by the government. We are surprised

that unproven and potentially dangerous e-cigarettes are being promoted at a time when there have been substantial cuts to successful public health services, including smoking cessation services.<sup>8,9</sup>

Competing interests: None declared.

Full response at: <https://www.bmj.com/content/362/bmj.k3571/rr>.

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