

Flavours

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The report misses the point of flavours in e-liquid. These are consumer products and in order for adult smokers to want to use them they have to be appealing. Attractive flavours are critical factors in the effectiveness of e-cigarettes for smoking cessation, also why Nicotine Replacement Therapy products come in a range of fruity and mint/menthol flavours. As the Royal College of Physicians pointed out on page 187 of their report, Nicotine Without Smoke (2016), *“if a risk-averse approach also makes e-cigarettes less easily accessible, less palatable or acceptable, more expensive, less consumer-friendly or pharmacologically less effective, or inhibits innovation and development of new and improved products, then it causes harm by perpetuating smoking.”*

The SCHEER Opinion regarding flavours disregards the importance of flavours for adults, who make up the majority of e-cigarette users. The report instead focuses on youth use which has already been demonstrated to be rare among never smokers, *“frequent use and signs of e-cigarette dependence remained rare in students who had only ever used e-cigarettes and never any other tobacco product”* (Jarvis et al 2020).

Wang et al found that the main reason for youth experimentation with e-cigarettes was curiosity (55.3%), and flavours were a distant third as a reason for trying e-cigarettes (22.4%). The importance of flavours to adults has been demonstrated in numerous studies. Farsalinos et al (2018) concluded that fruit and dessert/pastry/bakery flavours, were the most prevalent choices of adults who had completely switched from smoking to vaping. Disassociation with the taste of tobacco, as well as enjoyment of the product being used, are very important factors for adult smokers switching to e-cigarettes.

Havermans et al (2019) is cited in the section dealing with categories of flavours available in the Netherland (page 25 lines 7-14), but the most important findings of the study seem to have been omitted. Adults who have completely switched from smoking to e-cigarettes have often initiated e-cigarette use with fruity flavours rather than tobacco flavours, or switched from tobacco to non-tobacco e-liquid flavours over time.

Friedman and Xu (2020) examined the association of flavoured e-cigarettes with subsequent smoking cessation and found that adults who vaped non-tobacco flavours were more likely to quit smoking than those who vaped tobacco flavours.

Yang et al (2020) assessed the impacts of a flavour ban in California and they found that *“comprehensive local flavor bans, by themselves, cannot sharply reduce the availability or use of flavored tobacco products among residents. Nevertheless, local bans can still significantly reduce overall e-cigarette use and cigar smoking but may increase cigarette smoking.”*

Product appeal is a key element of the efficacy of e-cigarettes in transitioning adult smokers away from combustible tobacco. A critical part of that is having a range of flavours that can be tailored to each individual needs and tastes. Restricting or banning the flavours which adults use to remain smoke free will have the unintended consequence of prolong smoking, thereby increasing the harms from smoking related diseases.

References

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