

Review of: "Evidence-based policies benefit the men and women who smoke"

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I agree with the points raised by the authors.

Cigarette smoking is a global epidemic and morbidity and mortality consequences predictable. The limited impact of further tightening of FCTC recommendations like raising the MLA, raising excise taxes and smoking cessation programs are also predictable. Given the foreseeable devastating consequences of smoking and the paucity of success of cessation programs, it stands to reason that harm reduction (which has been proven to be very impactful in other fields such as HIV) would be a logical strategy.

Furthermore, given the unquestionably proven toxicity of cigarette smoking, substituting it with a less harmful alternative should be a low bar to cross. HTP and ENDS are currently available alternatives to cigarette smoking. There is a sizeable body of independent evidence that HTP and ENDS expose users to significantly fewer and less HPHC compared to cigarette smoking. There is also an increasing body of evidence of improved respiratory symptoms and other clinical parameters when cigarette smokers switch to one of these alternatives.

The 2021 TobReg report while acknowledging the above, dilutes the message by emphasizing on chemicals which are not known to be harmful and components that are not of sufficient concentration to be of toxicological concern. Also of the unknown potential future harm of long term use. As much as I believe the authors of the TobReg report have strived to be objective, I agree with the authors of this paper that the TobReg report will only continue the status quo and effectively seal the fate of the 8 million people who will die each year from cigarette smoking and second hand smoke.

I appreciate the concerns of the authors of the TobReg report that flavors and irresponsible marketing may contribute to tempting non-nicotine users to try HTPs or ENDS. However I also agree with the authors of this paper that this can be regulated and should not be a barrier to avail alternative products to current smokers.

This paper provides an effective counterweight to the 2021 TobReg report by providing a differing point of view. This will allow scientists and stake holders to critically assess the merits of the points raised both by the 2021 TobReg report as well as this paper. Because of this I feel that this paper should be essential reading to complement the 2021 TobReg report.

