Review of: "The case for development of an E-cigarette Ontology (E-CigO) to improve quality, efficiency and clarity in the conduct and interpretation of research"

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In this article, the authors present a justification for developing an ontology of terms related to e-cigarettes. They say that such an ontology (or dictionary) is necessary because people may have different definitions for the same terms. However, the authors do not provide enough evidence to support this idea. It it actually true that many words are so ambiguous or polysemic that this creates confusion? The authors do not persuade the reader of the need of such an ontology, or of its added value. A few examples of ambiguous or polysemic terms would help.

The paper just presents the need for an ontology, but it says very little about the author's stage in this process: did they already start this project? How will they conduct it? Who will be given the authority to decide upon a word's meaning? How will differences between experts be resolved? Who will be included and excluded among the experts? The authors are all UK academics. Will non-academic experts also be involved too? Will vapers (users), manufacturers, retailers, policymakers, smoking cessation counselors, clinicians, antivaping and provaping militants be included? ("Nothing about us without us"). If someone will be excluded (perhaps antivaping militants?) will this be explicit or implicit? How will this be justified? Who identifies and then invites the experts? Which countries will the experts come from? Will the ontology be only in English or will this be an international, multi-language project? And which words will be included or excluded, who decides about the inclusion of a word, which criteria are used? What if the meaning of a term varies across countries or changes over time? Will the ontology be updated? Will there be resources for that? Who pays for the ontology? Who will the authors of the ontology report to? Who will keep them accountable for their decisions? What legitimacy do they have? How are conflicts of interest dealt with?

These are only a few questions that come to mind, but the authors need to say a lot more about their project and their methodology. In its current state (April 2022), this paper is not sufficiently informative.