

Review of: "Randomized Experimental Test of a Reduced-Exposure Message for an E-cigarette: Comprehension and Related Misperceptions"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

This paper describes a study to test comprehension of health communication messaging surrounding ENDS use. Many current smokers do not recognize that ENDS reduces toxicant exposure compared to conventional cigarettes or that for the reduction to be of benefit a complete switch to ENDS is needed. The study tested messaging in 4 groups of adults: smokers, dual users, former smokers and never smokers. The total N was over 12,000. All participants viewed a short video about product use that contained (or did not contain) a health messages that the product reduced toxicant exposure but only if it was used exclusively. After exposure to the video most people in all the groups understood the health message delivered there were no differences between groups in comprehension. Lower health literacy was associated with lower comprehension of messaging regardless of group. Despite some study design issues the study indicates that health messaging can increase understanding that exclusive ENDS use may confer lower toxicant exposure and subsequent health benefit.

Comments:

No youth in the study. This is an important but overlooked discussion point. JUUL and other pod type ENDS devices are a mainstay of adolescent nicotine initiation and use. The Discussion should include a statement to that effect.

There was no pre test to determine if the reaction was to the experimental message or to already formulated ideas about exposure.

It would be helpful (if possible) to include an Internet link to the control and test messages.

The graphs would be improved by shortening the Y axis from 0-100% to 50-100% so that the reader can clearly see the small differences between the groups. Also clarify that the data in the graphs are from participants that viewed the test video—not the control video.