

# Review of: "[Commentary] Snus Has Saved Many Lives in Sweden – And Can Save Many More"

Anil Sukumaran<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Hong Kong

**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.

I have reviewed the commentary article "[Commentary] Snus Has Saved Many Lives in Sweden – And Can Save Many More" by Lars Ramström, submitted to the journal Qeios. Here is a summary of the key points and my analysis:

In the article, it is contended that Sweden's widespread shift from cigarette smoking to the use of snus, a low-toxicity oral tobacco product, has led to a significant reduction in smoking-related mortality when compared to other European countries. The author supports this claim by examining Swedish mortality data and comparing it to hypothetical scenarios where snus was not used. According to their estimations, snus usage has saved approximately 4,000 lives per year among Swedish men as of 2019. Although this effect has yet to be observed among Swedish women, further transitions to snus could potentially lead to even more lives being saved. Despite prevailing misconceptions about snus and an overemphasis on its harms, the author's call for health authorities to promote the benefits of switching from cigarettes to snus is not just a suggestion but a responsibility that they must take up.

The article makes a compelling case that snus has played a significant role in reducing smoking-related deaths in Sweden compared to countries without access to this product. The comparative data and counterfactual scenarios provide quantitative support for this conclusion. The methodology of comparing actual data to hypothetical scenarios seems reasonable for generating ballpark estimates of lives saved. However, the precision of the "4,000 lives saved" figure is uncertain, given the need to make various assumptions in the hypothetical scenario analysis.

The article could be strengthened by more directly addressing potential counterarguments or limitations. For example, are there any other confounding factors beyond snus use that could contribute to Sweden's lower smoking-related mortality? The call for health authorities to promote snus as a harm-reduction approach will likely be controversial. While the data does suggest a public health benefit, there may be concerns about promoting a tobacco product. The article could benefit from further discussion of how to balance these considerations. Overall, this is a thought-provoking and data-driven commentary that sheds light on the population-level impact of snus use in Sweden. While there is room for additional nuance, it contributes to tobacco harm reduction discussions. Further research directly comparing snus vs. other cessation/transition approaches could help strengthen the conclusions.