

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.

In their manuscript, the authors evaluated the comprehension of a factual message indicating that smokers who switch completely away from smoking to JUUL-brand ENDS can reduce their exposure to harmful chemicals in cigarette smoke. They emphasize the importance of ensuring that this message is not misconstrued by non-smokers to take up vaping; which is commendable. The "correct" message was received by 91.4% of controls and 95.1% of participants exposed to message. Below are some comments.

- Throughout, please replace JUUL by ENDS.
- In the abstract, please indicate that this study was not exclusively carried out online.
- When the authors mention that "other papers address message believability and effects on overall risk perceptions and behavioral intentions"; please add relevant in-text citations in support of the message and to reflect multiple papers.
- In the Methods section, the paragraph "Participants" should better be moved to the first part of the Results section.
- The paragraph "Besides needed to fit into with a tobacco company" should stay in the Methods, as these indicate inclusion/exclusion criteria of participants.
- The paragraph "A total of 14,816 people completed the survey (see Table II) should move to the results.
- Please explain why the authors did not use the before-and-after design (i.e. the pre/post test design) and then paired t-test to compare scores or McNemar test to compare dependent proportions (of correct answers).
- In the paragraph "Message Comprehension", add the multiple-choice questions in bullet point format or in a table/figure.
- The risk misperception in the Absolute Risk Misperception paragraph is redundant with "inattention". Please consolidate.
- Add P-value to this statement: "Comprehension was also relatively high among LHL individuals (81.6%), though lower than among AHL (91.4%)".
- Figure 2 is better displayed as pie charts.
- "Exposure to the message significantly increased this misperception among Smokers, Former and Never Users (see Table III)." Does this mean that the message was misleading?
- The following statement "The tested message asserted that smokers switching to JUUL would experience reduced exposure to harmful chemicals in cigarette smoke." is intuitive. Authors should highlight the presence of other

chemicals in vape aerosols. Several papers exist on the topic and, for transparency purposes, authors should cite such studies and reports; especially that one of the authors is employed with JUUL labs.

- Emphasize that non-smokers should NOT take up tobacco use in any form (conventional or electronic).
- Emphasize that the relative “safety” of ENDS is limited by what we know so far and does not reflect their absolute safety.

If authors attend to the above, I have no objection for the publication of the manuscript.