

Review of: "Youth Patterns of Use of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) Use, Population Assessment of Tobacco and Health (PATH) Waves 4 – 5.5"

Sulamunn Coleman¹

¹ University of Vermont

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

This study focuses on presenting prevalence estimates of electronic nicotine delivery system (ENDS) use among youth by ENDS device type, brand, and flavors over waves 4-5.5 of the PATH study. Overall, I thought it was very well-written and concisely presented, with particularly important implications for how ENDS flavors (and associated regulations) have the potential to shape youth ENDS use behavior. I have a few comments, but I am happy to recommend the manuscript for publication.

Introduction:

1. I thought the authors provided a comprehensive background and thoughtful explanation of recent changes to U.S. ENDS regulations (i.e., how specific ENDS products were affected by flavor restrictions), and how those changes likely affected ENDS use product transitions among youth.

2. In the last paragraph the authors note that P30D ENDS use prevalence varies considerably between youth from the PATH (8.6%), NYTS (20.0%), and MFT (22.5%) studies, and suggest that PATH “may tap a different sample or different phenomenon.” The authors also note in the discussion that reconciling these differences is beyond the scope of this study, but some brief elaboration on their point (i.e., PATH may represent a different sample or phenomenon) would be useful.

Methods:

1. Evidence suggests that dual use (i.e., concurrent use of ENDS and cigarettes) is considerably more dangerous to health than exclusive ENDS use. Thus, an examination of dual vs. exclusive ENDS use among youth within the context of this study could be immensely informative, as questions remain about whether specific characteristics of ENDS (e.g., device type, brand, flavors) are more likely to associate with dual vs. exclusive ENDS use among youth.

Results:

1. I found the results to be clear and straightforward. No other comments.

Discussion:

1. If, ultimately, an analysis of dual use is not included in this study, including the rationale for not examining dual use would be helpful (e.g., perhaps examining dual use was not possible due to small youth samples).

In summary, I thought this was a well-written, simple, yet highly informative study. I hope the authors find my feedback useful in making their revisions.