

Peer Review

Review of: "Tobacco- and Nicotine-Containing Product Use in Italy: Results from Two Cross-Sectional Studies"

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This study provides an extensive population-level assessment of tobacco- and nicotine-containing product use in Italy and represents a valuable contribution through its large sample size, repeated cross-sectional design, nationally representative sampling strategy, and detailed characterization of product use patterns, risk perception, and self-reported health-related outcomes among heated tobacco product users. The inclusion of two consecutive survey waves strengthens temporal consistency and offers useful epidemiological insights into early adoption patterns of smoke-free products. However, several methodological and interpretative limitations should be addressed to improve scientific robustness and neutrality. First, the exclusive reliance on descriptive analyses limits the ability to evaluate determinants, causal associations, and confounding variables such as socioeconomic status, dependence severity, baseline health status, or concurrent cessation interventions. Second, the use of self-reported improvements in respiratory and functional outcomes without objective clinical or biomarker validation may introduce reporting and expectation bias. Third, the sampling of I-HTP users from a manufacturer database introduces potential selection bias and may overestimate exclusive use or perceived benefits, which should be discussed more critically. Additionally, the involvement of the funding sponsor in study design, data analysis, and manuscript preparation raises potential conflicts of interest that warrant stronger methodological safeguards and independent validation. The discussion section would also benefit from a more balanced evaluation of dual-use risks, long-term health uncertainties, and youth uptake concerns. Finally, future studies should incorporate longitudinal designs, multivariable modeling, and independent population-based sampling to strengthen causal inference and enhance public health relevance. Addressing these issues would substantially improve the study's credibility, generalizability, and policy applicability.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.