

Peer Review

Review of: "The WHO Strategies to Reduce Tobacco-Related Deaths Are Insufficient"

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The article successfully highlights discrepancies between global tobacco control outcomes across socioeconomic regions and provides relevant examples from Sweden, Norway, Japan, New Zealand, and the United States to support the argument that alternative nicotine products may contribute to reductions in smoking prevalence. The discussion of harm reduction as a complementary pillar to traditional tobacco control strategies is conceptually strong and encourages constructive debate within public health policy.

However, several aspects of the manuscript would benefit from strengthening. First, while the article presents supportive evidence for harm reduction approaches, the discussion tends to emphasize favourable data without equally addressing well-documented concerns regarding youth nicotine uptake, long-term safety uncertainties, and dual-use behaviour. Providing a more balanced critical appraisal would enhance scientific neutrality and credibility. Second, the manuscript relies heavily on observational and population-level associations without sufficient discussion of potential confounding variables or policy heterogeneity across countries. Third, some claims regarding WHO scientific positions would benefit from more precise referencing and inclusion of counterarguments from existing WHO technical reports and independent systematic reviews.

Additionally, the commentary would be strengthened by incorporating quantitative comparisons of risk reduction between combustible tobacco and alternative nicotine products, along with clearer distinctions between harm reduction, cessation support, and population-level prevention strategies. Expanding the discussion on regulatory frameworks that balance harm reduction with youth protection would also increase policy applicability.

Overall, the manuscript provides a thought-provoking perspective on global tobacco control strategies and contributes meaningfully to ongoing debates surrounding harm reduction policies. With improved balance, stronger evidentiary contextualization, and expanded discussion of regulatory implications, the article could offer substantial value to public health policy discourse.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.