

ALTERNATIVE RESEARCH INITIATIVE NEWSLETTER

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Inside

Page 2

Global Tobacco and Nicotine Forum 2021
in London from September 21-23

Page 3

Japan cigarette sales dive on shift to vaping amid pandemic
Use of e-cigarettes among adults in Great Britain 2021

Page 4

Losing voice
Giving up smoking with the help of vaping

WNTD shows tobacco control at a crossroads

Dr. Derek Yach

Back in 1988, the WHO launched World No Tobacco Day (WNTD) to highlight the dangers of combustible smoking, strengthen global efforts to get smokers to quit and provide an international platform for new anti-smoking policies. The idea was for the organization's member states to present a united front in the fight against tobacco, and their message was stark: quit, or die.

Since then, the development of tobacco harm reduction (THR) technologies has led to a schism between those who support the science and those who reject it as unproven and dangerous. The result is that some of the most effective tools available to reduce health risk, among them e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products (HTPs), are ignored or misunderstood, with many smokers unable to make an informed choice or even access these products at all. If we are to remain true to the spirit of WNTD, to its principles and initial goals, we must embrace THR and its promise to save at least 3 million lives each year over the next few decades as we work to eradicate toxic combustible smoking for good.

In an article to mark WNTD for the China Daily News, longtime anti-tobacco activist Judith Mackay expanded on this year's theme, 'Commit to Quit,' stating that all forms of tobacco are deadly, even as the industry is "pushing the new products as the answer to cessation." As executive director of the Hong Kong-based Asian Consultancy on Tobacco Control and a senior policy advisor to the WHO, Mackay is a respected authority whose words contain no nuance. Instead, she spins them to fit a political stance in a world that is either black or white, with no shading in between, akin to an advertisement that lists all the possible side effects of a drug without ever saying what condition it treats in the first place. In that same article, Mackay continued to spin, claiming that

millions of smokers now want to quit because there is evidence they are more likely than non-smokers to develop severe side-effects from COVID-19 and die — this despite the fact that any links between the disease and smoking are still not fully understood and the only studies so far have concentrated on smokers who have already been hospitalized.

Other media outlets followed suit. "WHO says Covid-19 forced millions to quit," claimed one misleading headline. "No bigger motivation for quitting tobacco than current health crisis," blared another.

Throughout, there was nary a nod to the benefits THR can potentially provide, or that nicotine, the addictive chemical in both cigarettes and THR products, is not what makes tobacco use so deadly. There was no acknowledgement that quitting combustible smoking is one of the hardest things people will ever attempt and that even if they do not succeed the first, sixth or nineteenth time, they can still greatly reduce their risk by switching to a product that does not combust.

Worse, there was no recognition, not by the WHO, by Mackay or any other media outlet, that THR products, while adopted to some extent in more affluent countries, are priced out of reach or banned altogether in much of the developing world, where 80 percent of the world's smokers live.

Instead, the WHO offers smokers a digital avatar called Florence, which is programmed to talk only of quitting and the challenges therein; on the most recent WNTD, the organization honored people such as Harsh Vardhan, India's Minister of Health, who two years ago banned e-cigarettes and HTPs, and Princess Dina Mired of Jordan, whose country has the highest rate of smoking in the world.

Even as the WHO, Mackay, and others perpetuate an unempirical status quo, there are those who argue that

ignoring innovation puts lives in peril, plain and simple. In India, where about 120 million people smoke, Vardhan's opposition to THR was described as scoring a goal in his own net and Dr. Sree Sucharitha called for THR to be incorporated into programs that target low-income and marginalized groups. On the CNBC website, an editorial asked how the WHO can use harm reduction to fight HIV/AIDS and drug addiction, yet continue to resist it as a tool to help the majority of smokers who want to quit but cannot. In Australia, authorities were taken to task for emphasizing tax increases and plain packaging over THR — an opinion echoed over and over again on social media. As one Twitter user asked: "Why is your concern about my addiction to nicotine more important than my concern about getting lung

cancer?"
The science is in: harm reduction works. Now, the challenge is to transform the scientific innovation into widespread cultural understanding and acceptance — to create, in effect, a new conversation in which policies under discussion reflect the science. The WHO should acknowledge the benefits of THR. Countries should increase the accessibility of such products by regulating them proportionate to risk and develop strategies that communicate all effective cessation and harm reduction options. In the wake of this year's WNTD, there is no better time to take the all-important first steps in that direction.

Taken from

<https://dr-derekyach.medium.com/world-no-tobacco-day-2021-shows-tobacco-control-at-a-crossroads-579376fe5c23>

Homeless people offered free e-cigarettes in trial to help them quit smoking

Homeless people are being offered free e-cigarette starter packs in a trial aimed at helping them quit smoking. Homeless centres in five parts of the UK including London, Scotland and Wales will provide 480 contributors with starter kits or care group sessions.

About 70% of homeless people smoke tobacco, research from University of East Anglia (UEA) showed. The study will assess if e-cigarettes help participants quit smoking and whether it offers them value for money.

Half of the contributors will be offered the e-cigarettes, while the other 240 people will be allocated to a care group. The project is being led by London South Bank University (LSBU) and University College London.

Prof Lynne Dawkins from LSBU said that in an earlier trial, the kits "worked well" and staff at homeless centres were able to support the study.

The £1.7m project has been funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and is in collaboration with UEA, Kings College London, Queen Mary University of London, the University of York, Cardiff University, the University of Stirling and the University of Edinburgh.

Prof Caitlin Notley from UEA said studies suggested e-cigarettes were "more helpful" than nicotine gum or patches when people tried to stop smoking. "If we find that providing free e-cigarette starter kits helps people to quit, homeless centres could decide to adopt this approach in future, to help reduce the impact of smoking-related diseases on the homeless," she said.

Taken from <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-57636018>

Global Tobacco and Nicotine Forum 2021 in London from September 21-23



Global Tobacco and Nicotine Forum (GTNF) 2021 is scheduled to take place in London from September 21-23. It offers tobacco and nicotine stakeholders the opportunity to reconnect with each other at a time of accelerating change.

According to gtnf.org, the event would be held at the Rosewood hotel in London. The GTNF team is creating an exciting, interactive "hybrid" event featuring the industries'

top speakers as well as experts from public health, government and finance, plus networking opportunities that reaffirm the power of personal engagement.

From its launch in 2008 to the present day, the GTNF has become the global exchange for views and ideas among public health experts, government representatives, investors and members of the tobacco/nicotine industries.

Last year, GTNF organized an international virtual event. Previous events took place in various countries including USA, South Africa and India. The GTNF is the world's leading annual forum discussing the future of the tobacco and nicotine industries.

It was founded on the principle that through the dynamic dialogue and expanding perspectives the forum promotes, we can genuinely shape the future together. The GTNF team is creating an exciting, interactive "hybrid" event featuring the industries' top speakers as well as experts from public health, government and finance, plus networking opportunities that reaffirm the power of personal engagement.

Japan cigarette sales dive on shift to vaping amid pandemic

Japan's cigarette sales in fiscal 2020 fell below 100 billion for the first time in decades, as more smokers apparently opted to use heated tobacco products amid the spread of teleworking due to the coronavirus pandemic, industry data showed. In the year that ended in March, sales of rolled tobacco products plunged by a record 16.3 percent from the year before to 98.8 billion sticks, the lowest since fiscal 1990 when comparable data became available, according to the Tobacco Institute of Japan.

The figure represents more than a 70 percent drop from fiscal 1996 when sales peaked at 348.3 billion cigarettes.

In Japan, smoking rates among adults have been on the decline in recent years, reflecting concerns about health, according to a health ministry survey.

In 2019, 27.1 percent among men and 7.6 percent among women regularly smoked, down from 29.0 percent and 8.1 percent from the year before, the survey showed.

Heat-not-burn cigarettes that do not emit smoke, meanwhile, have become popular nationwide, especially among the younger generation, since around 2016.

Sales of such heated tobacco products in fiscal 2020 came to 41.3 billion sticks in Japan, equivalent to some 40 percent of rolled cigarette sales.

Such products involve an electronic device that heats tobacco leaves in a stick, and the user inhales the generated vapor instead of smoke. It is seen as odorless and reduces risks of causing fires.



It has also become difficult for smokers to light up cigarettes outside their homes after the revised health promotion law fully went into effect in April last year and people are banned from smoking indoors including in government buildings, eateries, hotel lobbies and workplaces. Amid the stricter rules for smokers, makers are also focusing on heat-not-burn cigarettes.

U.S. tobacco giant Philip Morris International Inc.'s Japan arm said it eyes stopping selling rolled cigarettes in Japan within 10 to 15 years. Its rival Japan Tobacco Inc., which saw falls in revenues and profits in the business year that ended in December due to slumping sales of rolled tobacco, hopes to restore its performance by launching its new mainstay heated cigarette product this summer.

Taken from

<https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20210627/p2g/00m/0bu/019000c?fbclid=IwAR3G6GEVqt1MsQ5ErqBwBR6GwNuxDWFeW9SVpeDsgvs3SFY4kaoE5p1bIM>

Use of e-cigarettes among adults in Great Britain 2021

Main findings of the annual survey, Smokefree GB, carried out for ASH by YouGov.



Use and Awareness

Having fallen last year for the first time, the proportion of the adult population using e-cigarettes has increased this year to 7.1%, the same as in 2019, amounting to 3.6 million people.

In 2021, 95% of smokers and 93% of the general population had heard of e-cigarettes. This contrasts with 2012, when 49% of adults responding to the same question were aware of e-cigarettes.

The number of e-cigarette users in Great Britain grew from around 700,000 in 2012 to 3.6 million in 2019, falling to 3.2 million in 2020, before increasing again in 2021 to 3.6 million.

Nearly two thirds of current vapers are ex-smokers (64.6%), and the proportion continues to grow, while the proportion who also smoke (known as dual users) has fallen to 30.5% in 2021.

The proportion of adult smokers who have never tried e-cigarettes is continuing to decline slowly to 30.1% in 2021, while the proportion of smokers who are current users has been stable.

Fewer than 1% of never smokers are current vapers (amounting to 4.9% of vapers).

The peak ages for current e-cigarette use in 2021 are among 35-44 year olds (10.1%) followed by 45-54 year olds (8.6%), and then 25-34 year olds (8.1%). The lowest vaping rates by age are 5% for young adults aged 18-24, followed by those over 55 at 5.4%. A slightly higher proportion of those identifying as male (8.1%) say that they currently use e-cigarettes than those identifying as female (6.2%).

Attitudes towards e-cigarettes

As in previous years the main reason given by ex-smokers for vaping is to help them quit (36%) then to prevent relapse (20%).

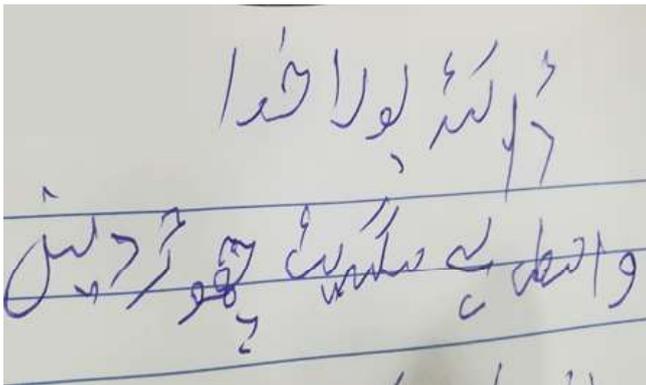
The main reason given by current smokers for vaping is to cut down (26%) then to help them quit (17%) and to prevent relapse (14%).

Nearly a third of smokers incorrectly believe vaping is more or equally as harmful as smoking (32% compared to 34% in 2020).

For complete survey, please visit

<https://ash.org.uk/information-and-resources/fact-sheets/statistical/use-of-e-cigarettes-among-adults-in-great-britain-2021/>

Losing voice



Ghulam Khan, 49, started smoking when he was only 16. He gave up smoking in 2008 after an operation of intestine. However, in 2018 he was diagnosed with laryngeal cancer as his voice box was removed in February 2019 at Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences in Islamabad.

A fruit seller from district Rahim Yar Khan, he has been a chain smoker. When asked why he decided to give up smoking he wrote in Urdu, "the doctor begged me to quit smoking in the name of Allah". He would consume two cigarette packs every day.

In early 2018, he started complaining about pain in throat. Considering it a usual throat pain, he kept visiting local GPs. But the pain did not abate. Only when he came to Islamabad, he was told he had laryngeal cancer.

Before 2008 Khan never made an effort to quit smoking and never thought of going to any smoking cessation clinic. "We never knew if there clinics which help you to quit smoking," his attendant at the hospital said. The attendant said more than Rs300, 000 have been spent on the treatment of Khan. "Now he has lost his voice for good," he said.

The attendant said Khan should have been an example of how smoking destroys one's life. "But you come to Rahim Yar Khan, and you will find scores of underage smokers. Ten-year old boys are smoking cigarettes."

Giving up smoking with the help of vaping

Muhammad Asad Ali, 25, started smoking in 2016. Two years later, he decided to quit smoking. For this, he started vaping. For a month, he remained a dual user of smoking and vaping before shifting to vaping completely. In 2021, he has also given up vaping.



"Vaping definitely helped me in giving up smoking," Ali told ARI, as he takes care of customers at a vape shop in Islamabad's F-11 markaz. "I successfully quit smoking in a month after starting vaping. I also quit vaping in March this year."

When he started smoking in 2016, Ali would consume half a packet or around 10 cigarettes in a day. As he was smoking a foreign brand, he was spending around Rs9000 a month. "I did not face any serious health issue because of smoking, still I wanted to quit."

After graduation he got his first job as a salesperson at a vape shop in Islamabad. "This is how I came to know about vaping." At the job, Ali thought about giving up smoking. "I have no idea of vaping but come to know about its use and advantages after started working at vape shop. I started vaping to quit smoking."

When he started vaping, his consumption of cigarettes dropped to four to five per day. "Only for a month I remained a dual user."

His spending on vaping also remained high. A vaping device in Pakistan can cost from Rs3000 to Rs20000. "This year I gave up vaping also. But I can say that vaping was instrumental in getting away from smoking. We all know quitting smoking is not easy."

Cigarette butts source of sea and ocean pollution

Cigarette butts are a more harmful source of pollution than plastic bags, according to a study published by NBC News in 2018. Some frightening figures emerge. For 32 consecutive years, cigarette butts have been the most collected object on the world's beaches, with a total of more than 60 million collected over those 32 years. This represents about a third of all collected objects — plastic packaging, containers, bottle caps, kitchen utensils and bottles, combined.

Cigarettes contain about 4,000 chemical compounds, at least 50 of which are carcinogenic. These include tar, nicotine, heavy metals, phenols, etc. These substances are contained in the filter of the cigarette, which, once thrown on the ground, end up in the sewers and contaminate the water.

It takes about 12 years for a cigarette butt to disappear. This is mainly due to cellulose acetate, a plastic that takes more than 10 years to decompose and which is one of the main components of the filter. Around 1.1 billion people globally smoke which means that 136,000 cigarette butts are discarded every second. According to Imperial College of London, a person who smokes a pack of cigarettes a day for 50 years will have indirectly used 1.4 million liters of water for their consumption.

Taken from https://kwtit.app/en/blog/posts/cigarette-butts-the-main-source-of-sea-and-ocean-pollution?fbclid=IwAR1zZXq54cJDMrPZqLPCObLwi6WcDh8wwGXPAO6mRFySef5NfFT5_FoZYc

Established in 2018, ARI is an initiative aimed at filling gaps in research and advocacy on ending combustible smoking in a generation. Supported by the Foundation for A Smoke-Free World (FSFW), ARI established the Pakistan Alliance for Nicotine and Tobacco Harm Reduction (PANTHR) in 2019 to promote innovative solutions for smoking cessation.

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