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Via Santa Sofia 89 - 95123 Catania, presso Torre Biologica “F.Latteri” 11° piano
095 4781124 | cr.coehar@unict.it

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THE WEEK

# Delhi Medical Association and Heart Care Foundation Organizes Workshop on Harm Reduction

*PTI* | September 02, 2019 10:16 IST

(Eds: Disclaimer: The following press release comes to you under an arrangement with PR Newswire. PTI takes no editorial responsibility for the same.)
NEW DELHI, Sept. 1, 2019 /PRNewswire/ -- The Delhi Medical Association, on 26th August, organized a workshop on harm reduction, a concept that focuses on decreasing the negative effects associated with certain behaviours, such as tobacco use. The workshop was attended by 35 doctors specializing in fields such as cardiology, pulmonology and oncology.

Notable among the speakers were Professor Riccardo Polosa, Director of the Institute of internal and Emergency Medicine at the University of Catania in Italy, and Professor Ron Borland, Nigel Gray, Distinguished Fellow in Cancer Prevention at Cancer Council, Victoria, Australia.

Highlighting the importance of 'harm reduction', Dr. Girish Tyagi, President of the Delhi Medical Association, stated that, "As doctors, we understand that some behaviours, especially ones that involve elements of addiction, are hard to change. In such cases, from a public health standpoint, it is important to minimize risk to these people by advising them on less harmful alternatives. For instance, use of injectable drugs bears the risk of HIV transmission, and to prevent HIV infection among people who inject drugs and their partners, the WHO, UNAIDS and other UN entities had created a package of interventions including needie and syringe programmes, opioid substitution therapy, condom programmes, etc. The same concept can be extrapolated to a number of other 'risky' behaviors like tobocco smoking."

India is home to over 100 million smokers, and each year, the country witnesses over 1.3 million preventable deaths attributable to tobacco use. While government efforts have been instrumental in discouraging tobacco use, the downward trend has been slow.

Also present at the workshop was Dr. KK Aggarwal, Padma Shri awardee and President, Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI),Dr. Aggarwal, who has maintained that quitting smoking is the ideal option but, in many cases, is not realistic, and stated that, "Globally tobacco harm reduction is increasingly being occeated as o key pillar of tobacco control. With the advent of technological innovations such as e-cigarettes or electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS), it is now possible for adult smokers who are dependent on nicotine to switch to alternatives that do not emit and cancer-causing byproducts like tar and carbon monoxide, Premier research organizations such as the Public Health England, and the Royal College of Physicians estimate that since e-cigarettes eliminate or significantly reduce users' exposure to nearly 400 toxicants, they are at least 95 percent less harmful than cigarettes."

Prof. Polosa, who heads the Center of Excellence for Acceleration of Harm Reduction (COEAHR) at the University of Catania, Italy , discussed the need to supplement tobacco Control strategies in India with harm reduction. He stated that, "India is home to almost 12 products percent of the world's smokers, and these tools present an enormous opportunity to reduce tobacco-related morbidity and mortality in the country. We've reviewed the scientific recommendation by ICMR that supported the India: government's decision to ban these and found that it did not take into account a holistic picture. It is important to keep in mind that ENDS are fairly recent innovations and the evidence. Both scientific and on-ground is still evolving. Countries like the UK and Canada, which have had a longer experience with these products. Are already witnessing unprecedented declines in tobacco consumption, thanks to a better understanding of THR. So much so that according to NHS data, smoking rates have continued to decline in the UK marking the lowest at 14.9% in 2017 in comparison to 15.5% in 2016 and 19.8% in 2011- a drop of around 1.6 million adult smokers. Smoking rates in Canada have dropped by almost ION with the policy focus and regulation of ENDS. Both these countries present a good case study to learn from, wherein the category is strongly regulated so as to ensure quality and safety of the products, restrict youth access, and at the same time, allow adult smokers to switch to these harm reduction alternatives."

Prof. Ron Borland , who has over 350 peer-reviewed publications, mostly related to aspects of tobacco control, stated that, "In light of emerging positive evidence, Canada. Australia and a few other countries that had initially banned e-cigarettes have reversed their stance and regulated them instead. Banning less harmful alternatives such as e-cigarettes, while continuing to allow the sale of cigarettes and tobacco products is counterproductive to the government's tobacco control agenda. Fears of nicotine addiction, while well-meant, are unfounded in this context, since e-cigarettes are meant to be an alternative to tobacco smoking. Moreover, nicotine in itself is a low-risk chemical, and its long-term exposure is not known to cause adverse effects or cancer. Policies or regulations on e-cigarettes should be framed on the principle of relative harm and should take into account the fact that these products pose less harm than traditional combustible tobacco products."

The workshop was a step towards creating awareness among medical practitioners about tobacco harm and harm reduction tools that can be made available as alternatives to adult smokers. The experts agreed that reducing harm associated with tobacco use by a significant degree would help smokers who require alternative delivery mechanisms for nicotine and are unable to quit of their own accord.

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INDIA TODAY

# India's move to ban e-cigarettes flawed: Cancer experts

*Government's move to ban e-cigarettes while allowing sale of normal cigarettes does not seem justified, cancer experts said.*

Indo-Asian News Service
New Delhi
August 29, 2019 UPDATED: August 29, 2019 21:08 IST

Policy-making should be based on scientifically sound evidence: Cancer experts | Photo from IANS

Tobacco use, particularly smoking, exacts a heavy toll in India every week but the government's move to ban e-cigarettes while allowing sale of normal cigarettes does not seem justified, cancer experts said.

Addressing a press meet organised by bcbpf-The Cancer Foundation, Riccardo Polosa of the Department of Clinical and Experimental Medicine at Italy's University of Catania, Ron Borland, Professor of Psychology at the University of Melbourne, and Sameer Kaul, Senior Consultant, Surgical Oncology & Robotics at the Apollo Cancer Institute here, questioned the ban on electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) in the country.

Claiming that the Indian Council of Medical Research white paper shows "a high probability of bias", they asked why it recommended a complete ban on e-cigarettes for the "greater interest of protecting public health" but not on traditional cigarettes.

Policy-making should be based on scientifically sound evidence and where such evidence is in nascent stages, efforts must be focused on speeding up or encouraging research, they said. Kaul announced a nation-wide, cross sectional, randomized study on Indian subjects, led by bcbpf-The Cancer Foundation, of which he is the founder President.

Saying it was important to "document the well-known damaging effects of smoking against the risks and harm reduction potential of e-cigarettes", he said that the ban of e-cigarettes that have "proven social, economic and health benefits over combustible cigarettes, is not justified".

"ENDS present an excellent opportunity for India to accelerate a decline in smoking rates and adult smokers who want to quit but may be unable to, have the right to be able to access harm reduction alternatives such as ENDS," he added.

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The three experts recently co-authored and published a scientific evidence based critical appraisal of the ICMR white paper, in the Indian Journal of Clinical Practice.

Polosa said that the ICMR paper "presented an uncritical evaluation of evidence gathered from poor quality studies", and they sought to make "a detailed, critical appraisal of all existing evidence on ENDS" in a bid to "convince ICMR to reconsider their recommendation for a complete prohibition of the category".

He said many reputed scientific institutes now acknowledge that ENDS pose significantly less health risk compared to traditional cigarettes or bidis. As many as 69 countries, like the UK and Canada, have regulated ENDS while the UAE has reversed its ban.

Borland said that e-cigarettes are an "important tool" for smokers to reduce their risk and this opportunity to improve public health will be lost if India continues to bans e-cigarettes.

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BioSpectrum the business of Bio & Health Sciences

# Bcbpf Cancer Foundation calls for rational policymaking on ENDS

28 August 2019 | News

**Proposes a longitudinal Study to asses benefits of ENDS**

In a press meet organised at the India Habitat Centre by bcbpf-The Cancer Foundation, international experts Riccardo Polosa, Department of Clinical and Experimental Medicine, University of Catania, Italy and Ron Borland, Professor of Psychology, School of Psychological Sciences, University of Melbourne, Australia; along with Dr. Sameer Kaul, Sr. Consultant Surgical Oncology & Robotics, Apollo Cancer Institute, New Delhi, came together to discuss the " Urgency of Tobacco Harm Reduction in India: Decoding the evidence on ENDS".

During the meet, experts shed light on the existing statistics that tobacco is costing India many lives and nearly 1.3 million Indians (approximately 25,000) deaths per week, are related to tobacco. Smoking is the number one cause of preventable death and disease worldwide, killing one out of every two smokers. The experts highlighted that the cohort studies on which the ICMR white paper based its recommendations show a high probability of bias from sources such as combining 'subjects' with or without a quit motivation. They further highlighted that it was difficult to understand why the ICMR's white paper recommends a complete ban on e-cigarettes for the 'greater interest of protecting public health', while the traditional cigarettes continue to sell in the market.

Policy making should be based on scientifically sound evidence and where such evidence is in nascent stages, efforts must be focused on speeding up or encouraging research. In the light of this need, Dr. Kaul also announced the commencement of a nation-wide, cross sectional, randomized study on Indian subjects, led by bcbpf-The Cancer Foundation.

Building up on the disease burden caused by tobacco consumption, Dr. Sameer Kaul, Sr. Consultant Surgical Oncology & Robotics, Apollo Cancer Institute & Founder President, bcbpf-The Cancer Foundation, New Delhi, said "It is important to weigh the science and document the well-known damaging effects of smoking against the risks and harm reduction potential of e-cigarettes. Without regulating combustible smoking that is significantly more harmful, banning e-cigarettes that has proven social, economic and health benefits over combustible cigarettes, is not justified. ENDS present an excellent opportunity for India to accelerate a decline in smoking rates and adult smokers who want to quite but may be unable to, have the right to be able to access harm reduction alternatives such as ENDS".

Furthering the on-going discourse on the subject worldwide and the policy scenario in India, three renowned global experts including Prof Riccardo Polosa recently co-authored and published a scientific evidence based critical appraisal of the white paper, in the Indian Journal of Clinical Practice.

Prof. Riccardo Polosa during his presentation at the press meet, called out the need to better evaluate the existing evidence on ENDS and said "ICMR in its white paper presented an uncritical evaluation of evidence gathered from poor quality studies. Through a robust appraisal of the reports and scientific data featured in the ICMR report, we aim to provide access to information, and with it, health literacy to all stakeholders. In our endeavor to support policy makers towards constructing a better future for India, a detailed, critical appraisal of all existing evidence on ENDS, was imperative. With our in-depth review, we hope to convince ICMR to reconsider their recommendation for a complete prohibition of the category".

Globally, Tobacco Harm Reduction movement is picking up pace and many scientific institutes of repute have acknowledged that ENDS pose significantly less risk to health compared to traditional cigarettes or bidis. 69 countries have regulated ENDS, including 34 out of the 36 OECD countries. Giving examples of specific countries, the experts mentioned countries like the UK and Canada which have chosen to regulate ENDS alongside cigarettes and tobacco products. UAE, on the other hand, which had banned the category, recently overturned the ban after taking into consideration the increasing medical evidence.

Adding to the discussion at the press meet, Prof. Ron Borland, while sharing his views, said "We believe that e-cigarettes represent an important tool for smokers to reduce their risk of smoking-related illness, and e-cigarettes can be a tool for public health to promote tobacco harm reduction. This opportunity to improve public health will be lost if India bans e-cigarettes, and with no new strategies the tobacco epidemic will continue. We want to encourage scientific authorities throughout India to review the available evidence with objectivity, fairness and an open mind, assessing both the potential benefits, risks of a new policy implementation and its potential impact".

EXPRESS HEALTHCARE

# Experts urge ICMR to reconsider ban on e-cigarettes

By EH News Bureau — On Aug 23, 2019

NEWS

Close-up Of Woman Holding Electronic Cigarette In Hand

*Experts claim ICMR White Paper fails to present balanced overview of risk-benefit ratio of ENDS vis-à-vis other combustible tobacco products*

Sixty-two leading specialists in nicotine science, policy and medicine have written to the Director General of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) in response to ICMR's 'White Paper on Electronic Nicotine Delivery System', which was published on May 31, 2019. The experts' letter draws upon the findings of an elaborate Critical Appraisal of the Scientific Evidence cited in the ICMR White Paper and challenges ICMR's radical recommendation of complete prohibition on ENDS or e-cigarettes, claiming that these views are in contradiction of the broad consensus amongst the scientific community. The letter, signed by experts from 20 countries, including India, urges ICMR to reconsider its recommendation of banning e-cigarettes.

The Critical Appraisal has been co-authored by renowned global experts Konstantinos Farsalinos of National School of Public Health, Greece, Riccardo Polosa of the Department of Clinical and Experimental Medicine, University of Catania, Italy, and Dr Atul Ambekar of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi and Chairperson of the Addictive Disorder Speciality Section, Indian Psychiatric Society.

The experts claim that the ICMR White Paper fails to present a balanced overview of the risk-benefit ratio of ENDS vis-à-vis other combustible tobacco products and therefore, their recommendations for e-cigarette ban are not justified.

The Critical Appraisal systematically reviews the four key arguments made by ICMR and presents evidence to counter them.

**ICMR's Concern 1: Health Risks and Effects of E-cigarettes**

The experts state that ICMR's paper presents a selective review of literature and fails to consider the substantial evidence that demonstrates the harm reduction potential of e-cigarettes. In their critical appraisal, the experts highlight that credible international institutes maintain that e-cigarettes are at least 95 per cent less harmful than tobacco cigarettes. This calculation is based on the much lower toxic emissions of e-cigarettes.

One of the major contentions of ICMR's white paper was the lack of long-term evidence. However, it is accepted practice, even among pharmaceutical products, to rely on post-marketing surveillance to examine long-term health effects, as it is unviable for any product to be marketed only after decades of research.

**ICMR's Concern 2: Second-Hand Exposure to E-cigarettes**

Contrary to ICMR's position, the evidence highlighted in critical review states that >99.9 per cent of e-cigarette emissions from exhaled breath of vapers consist of the base ingredients (propylene glycol, vegetable glycerol), water and nicotine.

In addition, unlike in cigarette smoke, side-stream emissions are absent in e-cigarettes and the only environmental exposure is from diluted aerosol exhaled by users.

**ICMR's Concern 3: Effects of E-cigarettes on Smoking Reduction and Cessation**

Additional evidence cited in the Critical Appraisal shows a positive association between e-cigarette use and smoking cessation or reduction. An analysis of a large US Population Survey indicated that the substantial increase in e-cigarette use between 2010 and 2015 was significantly associated with the first significant increase in smoking cessation in the past 25 years.

ICMR's criticism of sustained use of e-cigarettes by people who've managed to quit smoking is in direct contradiction of the stance taken by the US FDA and the UK MHRA, which recommend the long-term use of nicotine in the form of alternatives if needed, to maintain smoking cessation, prevent relapse, or even to reduce smoking. Studies have shown that risks from long-term nicotine intake are minimal and by far outweigh the benefits of smoking cessation.

**ICMR's Concern 4: E-cigarette Use by Youth and Gateway to Smoking and Addiction Effects**

ICMR's paper claims that e-cigarettes are a gateway to 'smoking and nicotine addiction', citing the 2016 US Surgeon General's report which reports a large increase in e-cigarette use among youth. However, the Critical Appraisal shows that the US Surgeon General's report does not differentiate between ever-use (even once), experimental use (in the past month) and regular use. The experts present evidence from the US' Monitoring the Future and National Youth Tobacco Survey, which shows that frequent e-cigarette use is confined almost completely to smoking youth and rate of use among never-smokers is low. The issue of addiction to nicotine from e-cigarettes, therefore, is irrelevant since its users were already addicted to nicotine from tobacco cigarettes.

**Monitoring and Regulation**

According to the experts, ENDS offer an opportunity to improve public health and they fear that this opportunity will be lost if ENDS are banned in the country.

Farsalinos, Polosa, and Ambekar draw attention to the regulatory framework for e-cigarettes in the European Union and Canada and urge that India combat its huge tobacco challenge by including tobacco harm reduction in its tobacco control strategy and frame regulations on similar lines.

Endorsing tobacco harm reduction and regulating ENDS could present a historical opportunity for India to accelerate the decline in smoking rates, reducing health impact on users and bringing down the financial cost of smoking treatment without any cost to the government.

PRESS UNCATEGORIZED WEEKLY OVERVIEW

# Another study backs vaping as safe, but US courts run wild and Mormons make up more rules

*A new review of the literature has, yet again, reached the conclusion that vaping is far safer than smoking and should be promoted as a harm reduction tool. However that hasn't stopped a group of US parents taking a major e-cig manufacturer to court. Now the Mormons are jumping on the anti-vaping bandwagon, too; in the best traditions of their religion, they're inventing new commandments – this time to ban e-cigarettes.*

By **Fergus Mason** - August 19, 2019 315 0

## Vaping health risks "unlikely" says major new review

A new review of the science on e-cigarettes has found that normal, regular use of vapour products is unlikely to cause significant health concerns. The study, carried out at a leading Italian research centre, conformed earlier papers that say switching to vaping has huge health benefits – and it also criticised poor and inaccurate reporting that, the authors say, has misled the public about how safe vaping is.

The study was led by Dr Riccardo Polosa, an acknowledged expert on tobacco harm reduction, and the results have just been published in the journal *Expert Review of Respiratory Medicine*. Polosa says switching is "a very good option" and "No-one can prove that e-cigarettes are one hundred percent safe, but all the science points to vaping being very much safer than smoking."

According to Polosa, despite e-cigarettes being at least 95% safer than smoking, public knowledge of the risks has become distorted. The number of adults who know vaping is a safe alternative is actually *falling*, thanks to sloppy journalism and hysterical claims by anti-vaping activists. Polosa hopes better communication will inform smokers about how to avoid almost all the health risks they face.

## Vaping group sues US government to delay review

Vapers in the USA have been facing a tidal wave of legal and political attacks recently, with the FDA's move to accelerate the licensing of products the most serious threat. Now harm reduction advocates are fighting back. An industry group filed a lawsuit on Wednesday that could force the FDA to give businesses more time to meet the complex and expensive paperwork requirements.

Under the FDA's notorious "deeming regulations" all vapour products will need a Pre Market Tobacco Authorisation to be legally sold in the USA. The application for this usually runs to several thousand pages and it's also very expensive, so small businesses – most e-liquid makers, for example – need time if they're going to complete their applications and stay in business.

The Vapor Technology Association says the current deadline of 11 May 2020 – brought forward from 2022 after the FDA was sued by a group of anti-vaping activists – doesn't give small companies enough time and will cause a wave of business closures. Now the VTA wants a court to rule that the 2022 deadline has to stand, to protect businesses and the millions of American former smokers who need access to safer products. VTA director Tony Abboud said, "It is time for FDA to stop moving the goalposts and changing the rules in the middle of the game to the detriment of our manufacturers and small businesses."

## JUUL Labs hit by class action lawsuit in West Virginia

A major e-cigarette company is being sued in West Virginia by a group of parents who claim the company's marketing deliberately targets teenagers. Lawyers for the accusers have made a series of alarming claims about JUUL Labs's advertising and product design, in an apparent bid to get a big payout from the leading brand.

According to the suit, filed in the US District Court for West Virginia's Southern District, JUUL's marketing strategy – starting with what their products look like – was specifically designed to appeal to children. In fact JUUL have always used adults in their advertising, have never produced pods in the so-called "child-friendly candy flavours" that excite harm reduction opponents so much, and despite what the West Virginia plaintiffs are saying, their e-cigs don't actually look much like a USB stick – they don't even have a USB connector.

JUUL Labs released a statement that ended, "We do not want non-nicotine users, especially youth, to ever try our product. To this end, we have launched an aggressive action plan to combat underage use as it is antithetical to our mission. To the extent this case alleges otherwise, it is without merit and we will defend our mission throughout this process."

## Mormons update rules to ban vaping

The Mormon church – the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints – has added green tea, fancy coffee and vaping to the extensive list of nice things its members aren't allowed to have. A new version of the "Words of Wisdom", the rules Mormons have to follow to be allowed to attend their temples, extends the church's 19th century list of forbidden luxuries to take in some newer products.

Mormonism, founded in the 1820s by convicted fraudster Joseph Smith Jr, bans its members from the consumption of hot drinks – usually interpreted to mean tea and coffee – and tobacco. Now a rambling article in church magazine *New Era* explains that you can't drink iced tea because it's still tea (even though it isn't hot) and you can't vape (even though no tobacco is involved).