PUBLIC HEALTH

E-cigarettes for smoking cessation

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Smoking is the second leading risk factor for early death and disability worldwide. Identifying the best means to support those who attempt to quit the habit has been a long-standing public health goal.

In new research, 886 smokers attending U.K. National Health Service stop-smoking services were randomly assigned to either nicotine-replacement products of their choice, including product combinations, or to refillable e-cigarettes with liquids of the flavour and strength of their choice. Both groups also received behavioural support for at least 4 weeks. After 1 year, 18% of the e-cigarette group was completely abstinent, as compared to 9.9% in the nicotine replacement group. Among those who didn't achieve complete abstinence, more e-cigarette users managed to reduce their smoking by 50% or more than nicotine replacement therapy users.

Although the long-term effects of e-cigarette use are unknown, switching completely from cigarettes to e-cigarettes would likely reduce known health risks. This study shows that using e-cigarettes is almost twice as effective in helping smokers quit in comparison to nicotine-replacement therapy.

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