

UK Parliament Endorses E-Cigarettes to Help Smokers. Will U.S. Follow?



By Alex Berezow, PhD — August 17, 2018



Credit: UK Government/Wikipedia [1]

If somebody invented a device that could save the lives of millions of smokers, should society encourage its use? Yes, absolutely, the Parliament of the United Kingdom just concluded in a new [report](#) [2] on e-cigarettes.

Published by the Science and Technology Committee, the report does not mince its words. It claims that the UK's National Health Service (NHS) is "missing [an] opportunity" to save lives by overlooking the benefits of e-cigarettes.

The report [summary](#) [3] begins:

"E-cigarettes present an opportunity to significantly accelerate already declining smoking rates, and thereby tackle one of the largest causes of death in the UK today. They are substantially less harmful—by around 95%—than conventional cigarettes. They lack the tar and carbon monoxide of conventional cigarettes—the most dangerous components."

Contrary to what critics will say, the report is not a full-throated endorsement of e-cigarettes. Indeed, it acknowledges that "there are uncertainties... about any long-term health effects" from vaping. However, crucially, it highlights a very important concept in risk assessment: The risk of doing nothing. In this case, doing nothing means allowing smokers to continue sucking away on cancer sticks when they should be encouraged to switch to a far better alternative.

The Telegraph [4] quoted a health psychologist whose opinion is largely the same as that endorsed by ACSH: "If you're a non-smoker and you take up an e-cigarette you almost certainly will damage your health... If you are a smoker and you switch to e-cigarettes you will protect your health."

This is such common sense that it shouldn't be even remotely controversial. And yet, in our postmodern, ideologically driven society, statements of common sense are controversial. We have been called shills for Big Tobacco for advocating the same policy that the UK Parliament just endorsed.

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In Seattle, the local public health agency put out a public health campaign that was clearly aimed at [scaring people](#) [5] away from e-cigarettes. A couple months ago, Senator Dick Durbin said that e-cigarettes don't "guarantee any end to tobacco addiction," which is a flat-out lie. One [poll](#) [6] shows that some non-smokers believe themselves to be morally superior to smokers.

With such nonsense prominently circulating in society, it's no wonder that U.S. public health agencies struggle to endorse an obvious solution to a true public health menace. Hopefully, the UK Parliament will provide a much-needed boost to the forces of common sense.

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Links

[1]

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_of_Commons_of_the_United_Kingdom#/media/File:House_of_Commons_2010.jpg

[2] <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/science-and-technology-committee/news-parliament-2017/e-cigarettes-report-publication-17-19/>

[3] <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmsctech/505/50503.htm>

[4] <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/2018/08/17/mps-behind-controversial-e-cigarette-criticised-vaping-lobby/>

[5] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2017/08/28/if-seattle-smokers-follow-king-countys-health-advice-they-will-die-11754>

[6] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2018/03/21/anti-smoking-bigots-trying-kill-smokers-and-vaping-industry-12733>