Renewed call for sensible regulation of e-cigarettes in the NEJM

By ACSH Staff — December 18, 2013

Last week, Drs. Amy Fairchild and James Colgrove from the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University published an op-ed in the N.Y.Times calling for tolerating e-cigarettes. We discussed its science-based evaluation, finding it highly informative and productive, in contrast to much of the inflammatory rhetoric so common in the media on this topic.

Today, in an online-first publication, the same authors plus Dr. Ronald Bayer have a Perspective piece in the New England Journal of Medicine: The Renormalization of Smoking? E-cigarettes and the Tobacco Endgame. It contains themes similar to their earlier op-ed.

They take pains to note all the arguments those opposed to e-cigs allege to be concerned about. They counter those positions with simple refutations based on scientific evidence and common sense. For example, they shred the CDC assertion that e-cigs have been a gateway to young people taking up nicotine by explaining what the statistics really show, and point out the obvious truth that proves the lie: while truly more kids experimented with e-cigs, the number of smokers among our youth declined over the same period. They express dismay that those in our public health agencies who have advocated for harm reduction (supplying a craved drug in a safer delivery system, e.g. methadone for heroin addicts), they disdain and create false alarms over the same tactic as applied to nicotine addicts: the 45 million smokers among us who might escape deadly cigarettes via reduced-harm e-cigs.

While also calling for sensible FDA regulation, their heartfelt conclusion bears repeating here:

[Given the magnitude of tobacco-related deaths some 6 million globally every year, 400,000 in the U.S. an unwillingness to consider e-cigarette use until all risks and uncertainties are eliminated strays dangerously close to dogmatism.]

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