

# JAMA headlines blare, and gullible press swallows the hype against e-cigarettes, again

By ACSH Staff — March 26, 2014



A new study actually a "research letter" in [JAMA Internal Medicine](#) [1] purports

to discern the efficacy of e-cigarettes in helping smokers quit. In fact, no such attempt was even made, but the study's authors, the journal, and the academic home of the authors all conspired to announce that the mission had been accomplished and the answer was, No they don't help.

It was a phony summary of a phony study that got most of the attention. Decide for yourself: anyone with a middle-school knowledge of the scientific method can decide if there's any validity to this. The authors, from that hotbed of anti-e-cigarette mythology and hypocrisy, the University of California at San Francisco (UCSF), followed 949 smokers over the course of one year. There were at baseline 88 current users of e-cigarettes, while the rest (851) were not. After the year had passed, the rate of smoking cessation was just about the same among the users and the non-users of e-cigarettes.

Can you detect, yet, the problem with the conclusions asserted based on these data? There are 2 glaring errors making this a nonsensical approach to reaching any conclusion: first, anyone who said they had used an e-cigarette at any time within the 30 days prior to the study's baseline was said to be a user, even if it had occurred once. But more importantly, no one bothered to require the intention to quit smoking on the part of an e-cigarette user! In simple terms, it's possible the subjects grouped as e-cigarette failures had no intention of quitting at all, with or without e-cigarettes. That small issue was not hinted at in the UCSF or JAMA press releases, and of course was rarely noted in any of the news stories.

Here is the [synopsis provided ready-made by Dr. Mike Siegel](#) [2]; we cannot put it any more clearly:

*...the authors report that of the 88 e-cigarette "users," only 8% reported that they were trying to quit at that time (that is, within the next 30 days). And only 40% of the e-cigarette users had any intention of quitting in the next six months. This means that we actually know for a fact that the majority of e-cigarette users in this study were not using these products as part of a quit attempt.*

*"What this indicates is that this is not simply junk science. Rather, it is a deliberate attempt on the part of the investigators to misuse data. They are using these data to draw a conclusion about whether electronic cigarettes are effective in helping smokers quit, yet they are knowingly drawing upon data from smokers who are using e-cigarettes for other reasons, who may have simply tried an electronic cigarette once, and who most definitely were not using these products as part of a current quit attempt.*

ACSH's Dr. Gil Ross says: Ever more clearly, it becomes apparent that the members of Big Tobacco Control, who were formerly devoted advocates of truth in science when they fought the cigarette companies in the Tobacco Wars of the last century, have adopted the ends-justify-the-means tactics of the worst of the enemies of public health. They think nothing, or so it appears, of distorting and exaggerating data, and spinning their distortions in the most unjustifiable ways **and for what?** To keep the facts about reduced-harm e-cigarettes from those who need them the most: desperate, addicted smokers, over half of whom will die from smoking prematurely, horribly, leaving grieving families behind. Thanks, UCSF, JAMA, Glantz, Frieden, and all your pals.

**On a related note:** Several individuals and the group CLASH (Citizens Lobbying Against Smoker Harassment) have initiated a lawsuit attempting to [revoke the e-cigarette indoor ban](#) [3] promulgated by NYC's Bloomberg administration in its closing days. We wish them well, and we hope that anyone interested in helping save smokers let them know they wish to help as well.

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**Links**

[1] <http://media.jamanetwork.com/news-item/e-cigarettes-not-associated-with-more-smokers-quit-reduced-consumption/>

[2] <http://tobaccoanalysis.blogspot.com/2014/03/new-study-on-electronic-cigarettes-by.html>

[3] <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/smokers-sue-e-cigarette-ban-article-1.1734840>