

DANA Position Statement

E-Cigarettes



OVERVIEW

Electronic cigarettes (E-cigarettes) are battery-operated devices that heat a liquid solution, which may or may not contain nicotine into a vapour for inhalation¹. Research relevant to the potential impacts of electronic cigarettes is continuing to evolve, including in areas such as safety of the product, cessation efficacy and trends in awareness and use.

The Drug and Alcohol Nurses of Australasia (DANA) supports evidence-based practice to help provide the best outcomes for clients with problematic substance use. DANA recognises that all nurses have an important role in the universal screening of tobacco and nicotine use, assessing the risk, providing evidence-based information and arranging support as appropriate. As such, DANA are adopting a public health perspective on the use of e-cigarettes to help assist in protecting all Australians from any potential harms of electronic cigarette use.

POSITION

DANA supports the Cancer Council Australia and the National Heart Foundation of Australia recommendations on the use of e-Cigarettes:

1. Ban the retail sale of non-nicotine electronic cigarettes (unless the product has been approved by the TGA).
2. Ensure smoke-free laws in each state and territory cover electronic cigarette use.
3. Prohibit advertising and promotion of electronic cigarettes, consistent with tobacco advertising prohibitions.

EVIDENCE AND RATIONALE

While it is acknowledged that electronic cigarettes are likely to be less dangerous than tobacco products, the health effects of their use remain unknown². Products inhaled directly to the lung are normally only approved after extensive safety and efficacy evaluation due to the serious issues that can potentially arise with this form of substance delivery³. A formal approval process also ensures that consumers are provided with specific guidance on safe and appropriate use. Electronic cigarettes currently on the market in Australia have not gone through these kinds of assessment processes.⁴

Many electronic cigarette products differ in contents and manufacturing processes, so studies on individual varieties cannot be generalised across products^{2,3,4}. The World Health Organization (WHO)

¹ World Health Organization. Electronic nicotine delivery systems. Geneva, Switzerland: WHO; 2014 Aug. Available from: http://apps.who.int/gb/fctc/PDF/cop6/FCTC_COP6_10-en.pdf?ua=1.

² Benowitz NL, Goniewicz ML. [The regulatory challenge of electronic cigarettes](#). JAMA 2013 Aug 21;310(7):685-6. Abstract available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23856948>.

³ World Health Organization Study Group on Tobacco Product Regulation. Report on the scientific basis of tobacco product regulation: third report of a WHO study group. Geneva, Switzerland: WHO; 2009. Report No.: WHO Technical Report Series 955

⁴ Cancer Council Australia, Position Statement – Electronic cigarettes
https://wiki.cancer.org.au/policy/Position_statement_-_Electronic_cigarettes

and other researchers are concerned about the safety of the chemical combinations used across the variety of products available. These chemical combinations have not been evaluated for either short-term or long-term safety.⁵

Electronic cigarettes are being advertised and promoted, with young people and children as a potential market. Electronic cigarette advertising should be subject to similar restrictions as tobacco products. The purchase, possession or use of electronic cigarettes containing nicotine is currently unlawful under state and territory poisons and public health laws. However, these laws are complicated and not well understood by the community.⁴

Use of e-cigarettes to assist smokers to quit

Currently there is not enough evidence that supports the use of e-cigarettes to help smokers to quit. The Therapeutic Goods Administration has not approved e-cigarettes as a nicotine replacement therapy to help smokers to quit.⁶

DANA suggests people wanting to stop smoking use evidence-based and approved treatments in consultation with qualified health professionals.

DANA will continue to monitor research on electronic cigarettes and will provide updates to the position statement on electronic cigarettes accordingly.



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⁵ World Health Organization Study Group on Tobacco Product Regulation. Report on the scientific basis of tobacco product regulation: third report of a WHO study group. Geneva, Switzerland: WHO; 2009. Report No.: WHO Technical Report Series 955

⁶ <https://www.tga.gov.au/community-qa/electronic-cigarettes> accessed 16 June 2019