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VAPING ADVOCATES STRESS NICOTINE NOT THE ENEMY IN FIGHT AGAINST SMOKING DEATHS



Advocates of reduced-risk technologies like electronic cigarettes are stressing nicotine is not an enemy in the fight to lower smoking rates and tobacco-related deaths.

The Association of Vapors India (AVI) issued a statement Saturday reminding the government in India **nicotine is not the element of tobacco that kills** smokers. Officials in India, a country that accounts for 11.2 percent of all global smokers, are considering a nationwide ban on nicotine-based vapor products due to the false belief the devices will lead to cancer. A number of India's states have already outlawed e-cigarettes, including Jammu, Kashmir, Karnataka, Punjab, Maharashtra and Kerala, Hindustan Times reported.

Tobacco's impact on health is determined by the delivery method, which in the case of cigarettes is combustion. The vast majority of disease-causing chemicals, up to 95 percent, are only released when burning cigarettes, according to Public Health England. This is why smokeless tobacco products and e-cigarettes greatly reduce the health risks associated with smoking. **(RELATED: Vapers Fight 'Ideological' Ban On Vaping Flavors In Massachusetts)**

Nicotine, on the other hand, is more comparable to caffeine — a mildly addictive but legal stimulant found in a wide variety of products.



“There is a widespread misconception about the health risks of vaping, which has led many Indian states to ban e-cigarettes, depriving smokers of a safer way of inhaling nicotine,” AVI Director Samrat Chowdhery said in a statement Saturday, according to the Hindustan Times. “This misconception is not limited to India.”

A recent study shows U.S. adults remain woefully misinformed on the health consequences of nicotine, falsely believing it is fueling cancer in cigarette smokers.

Roughly 53 percent of recently surveyed adults think nicotine causes cancer, according to a study released in February at the annual meeting of the Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco in Maryland. The survey, conducted with Pinney Associates, shows **misperceptions about nicotine are far worse** among smokers than non-smokers — a troubling point suggesting smokers may be avoiding reduced risk products like e-cigarettes due to this incorrect view.

Only 14.6 percent of non-smokers said nicotine causes cancer, compared to a staggering 52.5 percent of smokers. The results are consistent with previous studies showing a large **majority of smokers** still believe nicotine causes lung and oral cancers, while the harm actually comes from the carcinogenic smoke tobacco produces when burned.

“People smoke for nicotine, but they die from the tar,” tobacco harm-reduction pioneer Michael Russell said in 1976, according to Hindustan Times.

Nicotine, much like coffee, can act as a performance enhancer that strengthens motor skills and makes the user more alert, scientists say.

“While nicotine, as coffee and alcohol, contributes risks to pregnancy, it has, as far as is known, few other direct harms,” Professor Karl Fagerstrom, a leading expert in addiction treatment and creator of the Fagerstrom Test for Cigarette Dependence, **said** in the Journal of Smoking Cessation. “Unfortunately, there is a certain amount of reluctance among researchers to study the potential positive effects of nicotine because the substance is linked to tobacco and mostly manufactured and marketed by the hated tobacco industry.”

A range of **benefits from nicotine** on serious health conditions include **positive impacts** on Parkinson’s disease and Alzheimer’s disease, early research suggests. There is also **emerging evidence** nicotine can aid in fighting hypertension by reducing long-term blood pressure levels.

Misinformation about nicotine may be keeping smokers who want to quit from utilizing cessation products that contain it, including e-cigarettes, out of fear of developing serious health conditions, public health experts say. Government health bodies and scientists need to properly inform smokers about alternatives to cigarettes if society is serious about ultimately eradicating the deadly habit.