

Prevalence and perception of electronic cigarette use in an Irish population; a cross-sectional study

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Electronic cigarettes (e-Cigarettes) have grown exponentially in popularity in recent years. Despite this increase, they remain unregulated. Inadequate data exists to accurately quantify the health effects of electronic cigarettes.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

To quantify prevalence of e-Cigarette use and qualify attitudes towards their safety, advertising, and use in public.

METHODS

This cross-sectional study investigated, via a validated multiple choice questionnaire, the prevalence and perception of e-Cigarette use in three different cohorts; Secondary School Students, Respiratory Patients, and Healthcare Professionals. Smoking status was also obtained. 135 people completed the questionnaire.

RESULTS

11.9% of respondents had tried e-Cigarettes. 33% of respondents considered e-cigarettes to be safer than conventional cigarettes, while a further 37% were unsure of their relative safety. 71.9% of participants had encountered advertising of e-cigarettes, though only 28.1% viewed advertising of them as acceptable. 53.33% of Healthcare Professionals who responded said that they would be uncomfortable discussing e-Cigarette use with a patient.

CONCLUSIONS

Public opinion is largely divided with regard to the safety of e-Cigarettes. Despite increasing e-Cigarette use and exposure to e-Cigarette advertising, over half of health care professionals surveyed reported that they would be uncomfortable discussing e-Cigarettes with their patients. There is a need for ongoing education of healthcare professionals, patients and the general public regarding e-Cigarettes.