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MEDIA RELEASE

Study finds vaping is a gateway out of smoking for young people

VAPING is likely to be diverting young people from smoking, rather than being a gateway to the deadly habit, according to new research. There is also scant evidence of a so-called “youth vaping epidemic”.

[The study](#) was published this week in the *International Journal of Drug Policy* by Australian academics Associate Professor Colin Mendelsohn and Professor Wayne Hall.

Dr Mendelsohn said that one of the arguments to ban nicotine vaping in Australia is to protect young people from taking up smoking. However, the evidence does not support that concern.”

“Although teen vaping is associated with later trying smoking, this does not prove that vaping has caused the smoking. The research shows that young people who vape are risk-takers who are also more likely to smoke, drink alcohol, use cannabis and other substances and have unprotected sex.”

“The research found that smoking usually precedes vaping and most use by teens is experimental and infrequent. In particular, regular vaping by non-smokers is rare, generally less than one per cent in Australian and international studies.”

“Youth smoking rates have declined rapidly in the UK and US since the introduction of vaping, making it very unlikely that is increasing youth smoking. It is more likely that vaping is diverting some high-risk teens away from smoking to a safer alternative.” Dr Mendelsohn said.

“Young people should not vape or smoke. However, the reality is that they will take risks whether adults like it or not. It is better for youth to rebel by vaping than by smoking deadly cigarettes, as vaping has only a tiny fraction of the risks of smoking and is less addictive.”

Dr Mendelsohn said a less restrictive policy was urgently needed allowing nicotine vaping for adult smokers who are unable to quit with conventional treatments, while also restricting the access to vaping by young people by limiting how and where these products could be obtained.

“The reality is clear; Australia’s nicotine ban is having a harmful effect on public health outcomes by denying addicted smokers’ legal access to these less harmful products.”

“Australia remains the only western democracy to ban the use and sale of nicotine for vaping. However, in countries where nicotine vaping is freely available, it is the most popular quit smoking aid.”

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Reference

[Mendelsohn CP, Hall W. Does the gateway theory justify a ban on nicotine vaping in Australia? International Journal of Drug Policy March 2020](#)