Adult smokers’ discussions about vaping with health professionals and subsequent behavior change: a cohort study


Abstract
Aims: To measure the prevalence and changes in smokers’ discussions with health professionals (HPs) about nicotine vaping products (NVPs) and HPs’ recommendations about NVPs between 2016 and 2020, and their associations with tobacco product use transitions.

Design: Cohort study using multinomial logistic regression analyses on data from Waves 1 (2016), 2 (2018), and 3 (2020) from the International Tobacco Control Four Country Smoking and Vaping Surveys.

Setting: Four countries with varying NVP regulatory environments: ‘most restrictive’ (Australia), ‘somewhat restrictive’ (Canada), and ‘less restrictive’ (England and the US).

Participants: Adult exclusive daily smokers who did not report NVP use at the time of their baseline survey and had visited a HP in the last 12-24 months. Prevalence data came from 4,125, 4,503, and 4,277 respondents respectively for each year. Longitudinal data were from 4,859 respondents who participated in at least two consecutive surveys.

Measurements: (1) Prevalence of self-reported discussions with HPs and recommendations from HPs about NVPs and (2) longitudinal transitions from smoking to vaping (either exclusively or concurrently with smoking) and quitting (regardless of NVP uptake).

Findings: The prevalence of NVP discussions was low across countries with varying regulatory environments and study waves (range=1.4%-6.2%). In 2020, a low percentage of smokers who discussed NVPs with a HP reported that their HPs recommended they use NVPs in the US (14.7%), Australia (20.2%), Canada (25.7%), with a higher percentage in England (55.7%) where clinical guidelines for smoking cessation include NVPs. Compared with 12.0% of smokers who reported no discussion, 37.0% of those whose HPs recommended NVPs transitioned to vaping at follow-up. Transition to quitting was 9.6% with HPs' recommendation of NVPs versus 13.5% without discussion, a non-significant difference.

Conclusions: In Australia, Canada, England, and the United States between 2016 and 2020, health professionals’ discussions with smokers about nicotine vaping products (NVPs) were infrequent. NVP discussions were associated with NVP uptake, but not with quitting smoking.

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