Exposure to negative news stories about vaping, and harm perceptions of vaping, among youth in England, Canada, and the US before and after the outbreak of E-cigarette or Vaping-Associated Lung Injury (EVALI)


Abstract
Introduction: Little is known about the international impact of ‘EVALI’ on youth perceptions of vaping harms.
Results: Exposure to negative news stories increased between 2017 and Feb/Mar 2020 in England (12.6% to 34.2%), Canada (16.7% to 56.9%), and the US (18.0% to 64.6%), accelerating during (2019) and immediately after (Feb/Mar 2020) the outbreak (p<.001) before returning to 2019 levels by Aug 2020. Similarly, accurate perception that vaping is less harmful than smoking declined between 2017 and Feb/Mar 2020 in England (77.3% to 62.2%), Canada (66.3% to 43.3%), and the US (61.3% to 34.0%), again accelerating during and immediately after the outbreak (p<.001). Perception that vaping takes less than a year to harm users’ health and worry that vaping will damage health also doubled over this period (p≤.001). Time trends were most pronounced in the US. Exposure to negative news stories predicted perception that vaping takes less than a year to harm health and worry that vaping will damage health (AOR=1.55, 1.48-1.61) and worry that vaping will damage health (AOR=1.32, 1.18-1.48).
Conclusions: Between 2017 and February/March 2020, youth exposure to negative news stories, and perceptions of vaping harms, increased, and increases were exacerbated during and immediately after ‘EVALI’. Effects were seen in all countries but were most pronounced in the US.
Implications: This is the first study to examine changes in exposure to news stories about vaping, and perceptions of vaping harms, among youth in England, Canada, and the US before, during, and after ‘EVALI’. Between 2017 and February/March 2020, youth exposure to negative news stories, and perceptions of vaping harms, increased, and increases were exacerbated during and immediately after ‘EVALI’. By August 2020, exposure to negative news stories returned to 2019 levels, while perceptions of harm were sustained. Exposure to negative news stories also predicted two of three harm perceptions measures. Overall, findings suggest ‘EVALI’ may have exacerbated youth’s perceptions of vaping harms internationally.

Recommended Citation