Receiving and giving electronic cigarettes as gifts in China: Findings from the International Tobacco Control China Survey

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Abstract
Cigarette gifting is pervasive in China. As the Chinese are increasingly aware of harm from smoking cigarettes, e-cigarettes, often promoted as less harmful alternatives to cigarettes, may be viewed as appropriate gifts. This study is the first using population-based survey data to examine receiving and giving e-cigarettes as gifts in China. We analyzed 9,274 adults from Wave 5 of the International Tobacco Control China Survey, which was completed in July 2015. We found that the prevalence of receiving e-cigarettes as gifts was 1.3% among all respondents and 5.3% among urban smokers; the prevalence of giving e-cigarettes as gifts was 0.5% among all respondents and 1.2% among urban smokers. These prevalence estimates were very low among nonsmokers and rural respondents. Further analysis on urban smokers (N = 3,312) found that those aged 40-54 and 55+, those with high education levels, heavy smokers, and those who perceived e-cigarettes as equally/more harmful than cigarettes were more likely to receive e-cigarette gifts; and those who ever used e-cigarettes were significantly more likely to both receive and give e-cigarette gifts. Urban smokers with positive attitude about cigarette gifting were also more likely to give e-cigarette gifts to others, but those aged 55+ were less likely to gift e-cigarettes. Findings of this study indicate that the Chinese may perceive e-cigarettes as appropriate gifts for smokers, especially heavy smokers. Precautions should be taken to prevent e-cigarettes from becoming a gift choice for nonsmokers. Health campaigns designed to combat the social acceptance of cigarette gifting may also help reduce e-cigarette gifting.

Recommended Citation

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