

## E-cigarette manufacturers and products should be regulated in both East and West

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A man breathes vapes from an e-cigarette at a vape shop in London. While the US scrambles to crack down on vaping, Britain has embraced electronic cigarettes as a powerful tool to help smokers kick the habit. FRANK AUGSTEIN/AP

Recently, I was approached on London Bridge by an attractive sales woman with samples of what looked like sweet containers. On closer inspection, they were not confectionary, but instead turned out to be nicotine vape samples. I was not asked if I was over 18 (I look young for someone in their mid-20s), and I was not asked if I was trying to quit smoking or had a previous history of substance abuse. I politely declined.

The marketing for nicotine vapes around the world has been, by and large, poorly regulated, and it is commonplace in London to see teenagers with their hands on vapes blowing pillows of smoke. While 10 years ago it would have been more common to see teenagers experimenting with their first cigarettes under the cover of trees and park benches, the seemingly more accessible nature of vapes has started to replace this underage rite of passage with something more blatant. In the United States, the Federal

Court has launched an investigation into Juul, a large nicotine vape producer. The global regulation of vaping, which contains nicotine, a substance found to be nearly as addictive as heroin, should be more common than it is now.

It did not take long for Chinese authorities to crack down on Juul's attempt to break into its market. Just days after its launch, Juul was removed from two top Chinese e-commerce websites, Alibaba's Tmall and JD. This left Juul baffled, and "at a loss as to why".

Spokesperson Victoria Davis stated: "While Juul products are not currently available on e-commerce websites in China, we look forward to continued dialogue with stakeholders so that we can make our products available again."

Like many countries, China has a widespread smoking habit. It is estimated by the World Health Organization that nearly 300 million Chinese people smoke, consuming around 2.4 trillion cigarettes each year.

While vaping is generally viewed as being potentially less damaging to health than smoking in terms of cancer rates, and can work as an alternative to ease quitting, the sheer accessibility and marketing prowess of companies such as Juul makes vaping a concern to regulatory bodies around the world.

The active ingredient nicotine can lead to physical withdrawal symptoms similar to those felt if an alcoholic or heroin addict were to go cold turkey.

A toxic substance, nicotine raises blood pressure and spikes adrenaline, which increases the heart rate. Dependence on it can start within days of use. Whether you are a smoker or a vaper, inhaling smoke or water vapor, the chemical will still enter your body and react in the same way.

The Trump administration is also following China's lead, announcing that it may also ban the sale of flavored e-cigarettes. The US states of Michigan and New York have already enacted their own bans, citing increasing worries that such products appeal to young children. Juul themselves are in the spotlight and under separate concurrent investigations from the House of Representatives, Senate and Federal Trade Commission. It is vital that both East and West work together in tackling new issues such as these, and carefully consider how new products such as Juul should enter the market.

National healthcare and wellbeing should always be prioritized over commerce, and scrutinizing companies such as Juul may be a solid step in deterring other ambitious but potentially risky endeavors.

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