**Best practices in the use of Electronic Cigarettes for smoking cessation and/or harm reduction**

**Edward Anselm, MD**

Anecdotes for successful transition from cigarettes to e-cigarettes abound, yet the evidence for the use of e-cigarettes in not strong. New evidence from the most recent Surgeon General’s report shows the smokers can make up to 20 attempts over a period of several years before they are successful. With progressive effort, smokers can abstain for longer periods of time. More than three out of five U.S. adults who have ever smoked cigarettes have quit. Although a majority of cigarette smokers make a quit attempt each year, less than one-third use cessation medications approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration or behavioral counseling to support quit attempts.

**BEST PRACTICE:** Smokers who are motivated to quit smoking should do so using evidence-based interventions. These include face to face counselling, telephone counselling and medications. Counselling doubles the effectiveness of any intervention. Among the many medications approved for smoking cessation, Chantix@ is significantly more effective. Patients who are highly dependent of nicotine may require a combination of medications. [Smoking Cessation: A Report of the Surgeon General – Key Findings | HHS.gov](https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/reports-and-publications/tobacco/2020-cessation-sgr-factsheet-key-findings/index.html#:~:text=Smoking%20Cessation%3A%20A%20Report%20of%20the%20Surgeon%20General,latest%20evidence%20on%20the%20health%20benefits%20of%20cessation.)

**IQOS**: Among the thousands of devices and products IQOS is the first and only **electronic nicotine product**, approved in the US by the FDA as a modified risk tobacco product. “Scientific studies have shown that switching completely from conventional cigarettes to the IQOS system significantly reduces your body’s exposure to harmful or potentially harmful chemicals.” [FDA Authorizes Marketing of IQOS Tobacco Heating System with ‘Reduced Exposure’ Information | FDA](https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-authorizes-marketing-iqos-tobacco-heating-system-reduced-exposure-information) (7/7/2020) A recent vaping industry perspective addresses IQOS as well as other approaches to safer e-cigarettes. All of the devices available deliver nicotine and flavor, but the key issue is the chemical composition of the “juice”. [IQOS vs. Vape – Study Shows Which "Ecig" Is Safest (vapebeat.com)](https://vapebeat.com/health/marlboro-iqos-vs-vape-study-shows-which-ecig-is-safest)(8/18/20)

A review of the marketing campaign and a close reading of the FDA documents by the Truth Initiative states... ‘Notably, the FDA did not authorize IQOS to market itself as reducing health risks associated with cigarette smoking, saying there wasn’t enough evidence to support the claim. The concern is that users may assume that the permitted “reduced exposure” claim may translate to “reduced risk” and encourage IQOS use, especially among those who have not used nicotine products before.’ [IQOS in the U.S. (truthinitiative.org)](https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/emerging-tobacco-products/iqos-us#:~:text=IQOS%20is%20a%20heated%20tobacco%20product%20created%20by,Charlotte%2C%20NC%20store%20scheduled%20to%20open%20in%202020.) ( 9/15/2020)

**SMOKING CESSATION WITH ELECTRONIC CIGARETTES OR OTHER NICOTINE PRODUCTS:** The use of e-cigarettes for smoking cessation shows some promise and there are a few studies that show effectives equal to nicotine replacement. The variation in e-cigarette devices and study design do not yet support any strong conclusion. [Randomized Trials of e-Cigarettes for Smoking Cessation | Lifestyle Behaviors | JAMA | JAMA Network](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/article-abstract/2772742) At this time there a no published studies on the role of IQOS in smoking cessation. Smokers planning a quit attempt are encouraged to use counselling and a well-structured plan of quitting that does not allow dual use of cigarettes and e-cigarettes.

**Cost:** The annual cost of smoking a pack a day of cigarettes varies state by state ranging from a high of $3,820 (New York) to a low of $1792 (Missouri). [Cigarette Prices by State in 2021 | Balancing Everything](https://balancingeverything.com/cigarette-prices-by-state/) Additional costs for smokers include out of pocket expenses for medical and dental problems and life insurance.

The cost of smoking cessation counselling and medications are fully covered by health insurance without copayment or deductible. Electronic cigarettes IQOS are generally less costly than regular cigarettes.