

So...what's happened so far?

Firstly – e-cigarettes were introduced in the worst possible fashion. Rather than insisting that these products be regulated in the same way as other nicotine-containing products such as patches and gum, the public health establishment actively chose to ignore them, on the basis that as an untested product of somewhat questionable safety, e-cigarettes should not be available for sale at all. The problem is that ignoring something doesn't make it go away. In fact, this strategy has allowed marketers of e-cigarettes to operate in a regulatory grey area and sell an addictive product completely free of age-restriction, safety and efficacy regulations and with no marketing or advertising restrictions whatsoever. Welcome to the e-cigarette equivalent of the wild west!

Early on in the development of the e-cigarette market, manufacturers assured the tobacco control community and other interested parties that the target market for e-cigarettes was existing smokers and that the marketing positioning and messaging for the e-cigarette would be as a quit smoking aid.

That isn't quite how it has turned out. There are no controls over who can sell them, who can buy them, what is in them, and how the product might be advertised. It's back to the days of Mad Men – using sex to sell slavery and addiction.

I was shocked to see this advert on TV at half time during a football match I was watching with my 10 year old son Harry (see the adverts in the video presentation <http://youtu.be/Jme-KRNXGcM>)

This brand also has a male version of the advert and the versions available across the internet are far, far more explicit than that last example. WAY more explicit.

This is just one example (see the adverts in the video presentation <http://youtu.be/Jme-KRNXGcM>)

The advertising creatives on Madison Avenue can once again use humour & hugely aspirational imagery to sell nicotine addiction! (see the adverts in the video presentation <http://youtu.be/Jme-KRNXGcM>)

Of course these ads are aimed primarily at young people as is the packaging, flavours and pack design. There are literally dozens of such examples and there can be no doubt that e-cigarettes have been marketed aggressively to children. The statistics show that increasing numbers of children are being drawn into using them as well.

On one hand – one could say that those kids would have probably tried cigarettes anyway but the way e-cigarettes are creeping into everyday life is different.

Because zero nicotine capsules or liquid can be purchased – youngsters really can say that the e-cigarette they are using is not addictive. Who is to know any different? Especially when they come in flavours such as watermelon, blueberry, cherry cheesecake, lemon & lime, as well as good old tobacco flavour.

I find it incredibly sad that a couple of girls in my 12 year old daughter's class at school regularly have e-cigarettes on them and think nothing of passing them around the class claiming that "they're not addictive" and "taste nice".

As if getting youngsters as young as 12 addicted to nicotine isn't bad enough – I have no doubt that e-cigarettes will prove to be a gateway into 'smoking for real' for most of those youngsters.

Firstly – the peer pressure to move on to "the real thing" exists already but even more importantly for the simple reason that no e-cigarette will ever deliver nicotine as efficiently as a cigarette. In the same way that all addicts end up looking for ways to get more of their drug into their bloodstream faster, so it is with nicotine.

Having a generation of youngsters trained, predisposed, and regularly using electronic drug delivery devices, which is what e-cigarettes are, will no doubt be exploited freely by the dealers of illicit and even more harmful addictive drugs as the youngster moves from being a young teen to a young adult. This is scary stuff.

So...things are not going quite as the architects of tobacco harm reduction policy might have wished. But again – there are those who would argue that in spite of the points I've made – if the payback of such a policy was the saving of tens of millions of lives – it might be worth it.

Therefore the big question that remains is.... are e-cigarettes helping smokers to stop smoking?

In February this year Allen Carr's Easyway organisation tasked a research company, Atomik Research, to survey over 1000 adult e-cigarette users in the UK – the objective was to establish their attitude and behaviour towards e-cigarettes and smoking.

The results are based on smoker and e-cigarette user patterns amongst people who had used e-cigarettes in the UK since the 1st Jan 2014.

The survey indicated that 84% (eighty four per cent) of e-cigarette users regularly continue to smoke cigarettes as well as use e-cigarettes.

Nearly half of e-cigarette users surveyed (47%) indicated that they started using e-cigarettes in an attempt to stop smoking entirely. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) subsequently released advice that supported the findings of our survey.

In other words.....

The vast majority of e-cigarette users smoke when they can...and use e-cigarettes (vape) when they can't!

And this is where the harm reduction policy falls down. If smokers continue to smoke as well as vape the model that saves tens of millions of lives simply doesn't work!

More than that – a new generation of nicotine addicts with a predisposition to drug use via electronic devices have been recruited via the e-cigarette phenomenon.

Equally devastating is the fact that smokers who previously may have abstained from smoking at times when there were not able to smoke, for example at home with kids, in the car with kids, at non-smoker friends' houses, will now vape – meaning they're consuming more nicotine than they might have done before the introduction of e-cigarettes. Remember – they smoke when they can and vape when they can't.

Who knows what damage will be done by the re-normalisation of inhaling an addictive drug orally in public? The transition from smoking

seeming to be a normal thing to do to it being considered abnormal didn't take very long in the UK following the smoking bans, so how long will it take for that progress to be reversed? It seems that we've taken a huge step backwards in that regard.

In addition to that – is anyone keeping count of the number of former smokers who quit with willpower who are being sucked back into nicotine addiction by unbridled e-cigarette availability, marketing, and advertising?

Some argue that there are no studies that indicate the damage to health caused by long term use of nicotine delivered by e-cigarettes but more importantly than that – there are no studies and arguably won't be any studies in the near future that indicate the damage to health caused by long term use of e-cigarettes whilst the user also continues to smoke

Even worse – I suspect that the first studies that will be produced with regard to these questions are likely to come from two main sources....THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY AND THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY. I'll return to that particular point later.

On social media – it's interesting that there are some extremely aggressive and outspoken supporters for e-cigarettes. Of course some of these may be genuine – the e-cigarette version of committed smokers – but in most cases I'm led to believe that, particularly on social media, many outspoken supporters of e-cigarettes are employed by e-cigarette companies with a vested interest in creating pro-e-cigarette posts across the internet.

So what does the Tobacco Control establishment say NOW?

Senior members of the Tobacco Control Establishment seem to be in denial about the risks of youngsters being attracted to e-cigarettes and the likely effect of the renormalisation of smoker/smoker-like behaviour because there aren't yet large, population based studies showing that this is happening. Yet we can see that these are real issues. Do we really need to wait for a piece of research to tell us that marketing e-cigarettes to young people and renormalizing smoker/smoker-like behaviour across the media and society generally will result in more young people using them? It seems pretty obvious to me. Waiting for studies isn't a case of fiddling while Rome burns – it's pouring petrol on and fanning the flames.

In summary then: we have a new generation of addicts in development; existing smokers are likely to be increasing their intake of nicotine rather than decreasing it (by smoking AND vaping); there continues to be a re-normalisation of smoker/smoker-like behaviour; many former smokers are being drawn back into nicotine addiction and smoking; little is known of the health effects of long term nicotine use in the dual form of smoking and vaping; and those with a vested interest in 'The Nicotine Industry' will lead the field in establishing how harmful or otherwise it may be (and we all know how well that's turned out in the past).

This is an industry with a proven track record of fraud on a global scale, lies, bribery, corruption, suppression of study data that's resulted in millions of lives being lost, direct involvement in organised international tobacco smuggling, aggressive marketing to children in the developing world, as well as more covert targeting of youngsters in other parts of the world where direct marketing to children is forbidden. This is the most powerful industry on the planet and it saddens me to admit – they ARE winning 'The Nicotine War'.

I'm absolutely certain that far from our mission to cure the world of smoking nearing an end or beginning to lack relevance, unfortunately we've only just begun. Thank goodness for Allen Carr's Easyway!

This piece which was first presented at Allen Carr's Easyway International's 20th Global Conference 2014

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Allen Carr's Easyway organisation is most well known for its Stop Smoking Clinics, books, DVDs, online webcast seminars, and apps.

The method has helped millions of addicts escape from addiction. Allen Carr's Easyway has sold over 14 MILLION books worldwide & has stop smoking clinics in more than 150 cities in over 50 countries worldwide.

Most of the clients attending Allen Carr's Easyway Clinics do so on the strength of the personal recommendation of friends, colleagues and members of their family who quit smoking using Allen Carr's Easyway Method.

Allen Carr books www.easywaypublishing.com

Allen Carr app (great vintage film of Allen presenting the method himself) for iPhone <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/allen-carrs-easy-way-to-stop/id585624864?mt=8&affid=2172621&ign-mpt=uo=4>

Allen Carr app (great vintage film of Allen presenting the method himself) for android https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=allan.carr&feature=search_result#?t=W251bGwsMSwyLDEsmFsbGVuLmNhcnliXQ

Allen Carr's Easyway "Stop smoking in 60 minutes" video on demand <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/allencarreasyway>

Allen Carr's Easyway To Stop Smoking webcast <http://www.theeasywaytostopsmoking.com/Webcast.aspx>

Allen Carr Easyway To Stop Smoking Clinics (with money back guarantee) www.allencarr.com