

The Hon Carrie Lam GBM, GBS
Chief Executive
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Reference DZ/2018/043

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Date 24 October 2018

Dear Mrs. Lam,

We are writing to you to express our concerns about the content of a letter addressed to you earlier this year which argued against what was then a proposal by the government of Hong Kong to ban sales of e-cigarettes¹. We have read this letter and believe that it contains a highly selective and misleading summary of the evidence. The European Public Health Association (EUPHA) has recently updated its assessment of this evidence and, in the light of what is now known, strongly supports the precautionary approach towards e-cigarettes – or more accurately, Electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS). Moreover, we note that, since our review, the US FDA has reversed its previously tolerant approach, describing an epidemic of vaping in American youth that has coincided with the first increase in youth smoking in decades.

EUPHA's 'Facts and Fiction on e-cigs', presents the evidence-base on this issue² with the following being our key conclusions:

- The health risks associated with e-cigarettes remain uncertain but they cannot be considered safe. What is certain is that statements that they are some percentage safer than conventional cigarettes are so far unjustified.
- Overall, e-cigarettes may help some smokers quit but, for most, e-cigarettes depress quitting.
- The net effect of making e-cigarettes widely available, at population level, seems likely to be an increase in sole and dual use of e-cigarettes and sole smoking unless there is very stringent regulation.
- E-cigarettes and “smoke not burn” products are portrayed publicly by the tobacco industry as a means to reduce smoking yet, at the same time, these companies are actively promoting their combustible products.

Hong Kong's recent decision to ban sales of these products has been applauded internationally and we urge you to uphold this health promoting policy decision.

Yours sincerely,

Natasha Azzopardi Muscat
EUPHA President

Martin McKee
EUPHA immediate-past President

Dineke Zeegers Paget
Executive Director of EUPHA

¹ The letter dated 20 Augustus 2018 and undersigned by Professor David B. Abrams PhD, Professor Raymond S. Niaura PhD, Clive D. Bates MSc, David T. Swenor JD.

² 'Facts and Fiction on e-cigs' is available here:

https://eupha.org/repository/advocacy/EUPHA_facts_and_fiction_on_e-cigs.pdf