

Researchers state need for further research into electronic cigarettes

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A new Cancer Research UK report highlights the unanswered questions surrounding the safety and effectiveness of electronic or e-cigarettes.

In a summary of the [report](#) – published in *Tobacco Control* – researchers from the University of Stirling select important issues for debate such as the involvement of the [tobacco industry](#), marketing and whether e-cigarettes might undermine smokefree laws. And they ask whether it is ethical to promote an addictive product – since e-cigarettes contain nicotine. These are questions that need to be answered by research and by regulators.

E-cigarettes are a relatively new product – most have been launched within the last five years. They are considered by many to be a safer alternative to regular cigarettes as they do not involve inhaling [tobacco](#)

[smoke](#). There is emerging evidence that many smokers are using e-cigarettes to help cut down, and some are trying to quit using them.

However, there has been little research into how safe e-cigarettes are. There is also very little regulation to control these products or their marketing.

Regulation of e-cigarettes is being considered by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). A decision is expected in the coming months. Meanwhile the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is expected to report on its consultation on the use of tobacco harm reduction products.

Dr Marisa de Andrade, report author from the Institute for [Social Marketing](#) (ISM), said: "Many questions remain unanswered and this report is the first attempt to set out a unified research agenda for the tobacco control and public health community in the UK.

"It recognises the need to address individual, tobacco control, political and philosophical issues as well as the important issues of safety and efficacy."

Professor Gerard Hastings, report author and also based at the ISM, added: "It is vital that the [tobacco control](#) movement agrees a unified strategy to address these developments as amidst all the uncertainty there's one certainty: any divisions will be ruthlessly exploited by vested interests."

Sarah Woolnough, Cancer Research UK's executive director of policy and information, said: "Whilst there is some encouraging evidence to suggest that e-cigarettes are helping smokers to reduce their smoking, and helping some smokers to quit, we need to understand much more about what these products contain, how they are being used, and how

they are being marketed. This report helps us to focus on the relevant issues for research.

"We agree e-cigarettes should be licensed to ensure product safety and to make sure the doses are consistent. And e-cigarettes shouldn't be marketed to non-smokers, especially young people. We look forward to reading the MHRA findings when they report later this year."

More information: [blogs.bmj.com/tc/2013/05/29/to ... ied-research-agenda/](https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/tc/2013/05/29/to-what-should-we-expect-from-the-research-agenda/)

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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