# Pros and cons of electronic cigarette regulation discussed

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Cross-section of an e-cigarette.
Illustration: US Food and Drug Admin.

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(HealthDay)—The pros and cons of electronic cigarette (EC) regulation are discussed in to two editorials published online July 23 in *The Lancet Respiratory Medicine*.

Nathan K. Cobb, M.D., from the Georgetown University Medical Center, and Caroline O. Cobb, from the Schroeder Institute for Tobacco Research and Policy—both in Washington, D.C., discuss the regulatory challenges for electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS), which are currently marketed without oversight. The authors note that nicotine replacement products only receive U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval after extensive research, while ENDS and refill solutions that contain dangerous concentrations of nicotine are readily available. The differential regulation can cause price discrepancies and distinct marketing and advertising claims in favor of the less regulated product.

This dual-class regulation could disincentivize research into safety, quality control, and effectiveness.

Peter Hajek, Ph.D., from the Queen Mary University of London, and colleagues discuss whether ECs should be regulated as a medicinal device. The authors note that research shows little indication of harm from ECs and substantial potential benefits. European regulation of ECs would ensure consumer safety, detail nicotine concentrations, restrict the development and spread of ECs, and possibly renormalize smoking. However, medicinal licensing would hinder the development of ECs and would increase the costs involved; consequently, cigarettes would remain a cheaper and more attractive alternative. In addition, the current consumer protection regulations are adequate to ensure ECs safety.

"Excessive regulation of ECs would protect the market monopoly of cigarettes and have the potential consequences of disease in and death of millions of smokers who were prevented from moving on to the next generation of ECs," Hajek and colleagues write.

Several authors from the Hajek editorial disclosed financial ties to the pharmaceutical industry, and one disclosed involvement in litigation against tobacco companies and for makers of smoking cessation products.

**More information:** Editorial 1 (subscription or payment may be required)
Editorial 2 (subscription or payment may be required)