

Study finds parallels between candy, Kool-Aid, and flavored tobacco

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Dunhill Early Morning Pipe Tobacco, 1990's Murray. Credit: Sjschen/Wikipedia

(Medical Xpress)—In a study published today in the *New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM)*, Portland State University professor James F. Pankow reveals striking similarities between the patterns in the flavoring chemicals used in flavored tobacco products and those in popular candy and Kool-Aid products.

Pankow and his colleagues analyzed 12 artificially flavored candy and fruit drink products, including different versions of LifeSavers, Jolly Ranchers and Kool-Aid, and compared them to 15 widely-available flavored [tobacco products](#). They found significant overlap in the chemical signatures of the flavor chemicals. For example, the flavor chemical patterns for cherry Kool-Aid and the cigarette-like "Wild Cherry" Cheyenne cigars are extremely similar. Several of the [tobacco](#) products contained flavor chemicals at much higher concentrations than in the non-tobacco products.

"There has been much concern that tobacco products in flavors such as 'cherry,' 'grape,' 'apple,' 'peach,' 'berry,' etc. constitute 'candy-flavored' tobacco," explains Pankow. "So, we decided to see if that was really true at a chemical level. We found that, indeed, the flavor chemicals present in candies and Kool-Aid are very much the same as in similarly flavored tobacco products."

Many public health officials have long ascribed the use of artificial flavorings in tobacco products as being part of industry efforts to attract youth to tobacco. The 2009 Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act banned the use of "characterizing flavors" in cigarettes. The law does not prohibit such flavoring in little cigars, many of which are extremely similar in design to cigarettes. Similarly exempted are cigarillos, loose pipe tobacco, moist snuff, and tobacco rolling papers also known as "blunt wraps."

On April 24th, the FDA proposed federal restrictions regarding nicotine delivery systems known as electronic cigarettes. Though the FDA acknowledged concerns about characterizing flavors in certain cigars, and that flavors can be especially attractive to youth, regulations have not yet been proposed. A copy of the new FDA rules is available online.

"Now that FDA has recently issued proposed rules that would bring

cigars under its jurisdiction, the new research and the fact that young people are using these products at high rates should signal the FDA to act to remove flavors from all tobacco products, including cigars," explained Dr. David Abrams, Executive Director of the Schroeder Institute for Tobacco Research and Policy Studies at the American Legacy Foundation. "Public health and tobacco control advocates will continue to reinforce this call with today's findings showing actual candy flavorings in tobacco."

Concerns that candy-flavored tobacco products are skillfully engineered to attract and habituate more young people to smoking are echoed by many other cancer prevention and tobacco-control advocates.

"Dr. Pankow's study represents an important step forward in our understanding of what may be driving some young people to smoke," said Brian Druker, director of the Knight Cancer Institute at Oregon Health & Science University in Portland, Oregon. "Understanding the interplay between sweet flavoring and tobacco use will better equip us to protect the health of our children and reinforce lifestyle choices that aid in cancer prevention."

"It is evident that with the assault on the young and the vulnerable with candy-like flavorings, the tobacco industry continues its relentless efforts to entrap and addict," offered Channing Robertson, professor emeritus of chemical engineering at Stanford University. "This is their brand of 'science' – one aimed at prematurely ending the lives of consumers when their products are used as intended. No other such product exists nor is allowed in any civil society on this planet."

Robertson provided pivotal testimony about chemical uptake of nicotine during the 1997 Minnesota Tobacco Trial, the Minnesota State Attorney General lawsuit against the tobacco industry, and a precursor to the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement of 1998.

More information: Jessica E. Brown, B.S., Wentai Luo, Ph.D., Lorne M. Isabelle, M.S., James F. Pankow, Ph.D. "Candy Flavorings in Tobacco." *NEJM* May 7, 2014. [DOI: 10.1056/NEJMc1403015](https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMc1403015)

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