

# Chest physicians split on pros and cons of e-cigarettes

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Patients are asking their chest physicians about using e-cigarettes to quit smoking, but those physicians are divided about whether the products do more harm than good, according to a Yale-led study. The finding demonstrates the need for more research on e-cigarettes that will help physicians counsel their patients who smoke.

Since the invention of e-cigarettes in the early 2000s, experts have disagreed about their role in smoking cessation and reducing harms from smoking. While some experts believe that e-cigarettes are simply a tool for getting consumers—particularly youth—addicted to nicotine, others view them as a potential alternative for smokers who struggle to quit with traditional cessation therapies.

To get a handle on the opinion of [chest physicians](#), Stephen Baldassarri, M.D., and his co-authors conducted a survey of members of the American College of Chest Physicians. The survey asked about the providers' experiences with [e-cigarette](#) users and their opinion about the products.

Of the nearly 1,000 respondents, the vast majority, 88 percent, reported that their [patients](#) had inquired about e-cigarettes, and one-third said at least some of their patients use the products. "Physicians are likely to encounter this in their practice," said Baldassarri, a clinical fellow in pulmonary medicine.

More respondents than not—41 percent compared with 21 percent—disagreed with the notion that patients could improve their health by switching from [tobacco smoking](#) to e-cigarettes. However, the physicians were split about whether e-cigarettes promoted smoking cessation.

"Although very few of the respondents thought that e-cigarettes were more harmful than smoking, many were not convinced that switching from smoking to e-cigarette use would improve a patient's health," he noted. "There was also a clear divide among the survey [respondents](#) regarding whether the products should be used as a smoking cessation aid."

This divergence in opinion about e-cigarettes, which mirrors results from prior surveys, points to the need for more research. While most

providers would agree that they do not want nonsmokers or youth adopting e-cigarettes, questions remain about the risks and benefits for traditional smokers.

"Further research into these [products](#) is going to be critical for providing the evidence base for physicians to make appropriate recommendations for their patients who smoke," he said.

**More information:** Stephen R. Baldassarri et al. Practise Patterns and Perceptions of Chest Health Care Providers on Electronic Cigarette Use: An In-Depth Discussion and Report of Survey Results, *Journal of Smoking Cessation* (2017). [DOI: 10.1017/jsc.2017.6](https://doi.org/10.1017/jsc.2017.6)

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