

Medical dramas influence thoughts on dangers from vaping, new Twitter analysis reveals

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Beth Hoffman, Ph.D. Credit: University of Pittsburgh

After three popular primetime medical dramas included storylines about health harms from using e-cigarettes, hundreds of people took to Twitter

to comment—including some who said they planned to quit vaping because of what they saw on the shows. A new analysis led by University of Pittsburgh School of Public Health scientists and published in the [*Journal of Health Communication*](#) examines the tweets for insights into the use of television shows to share public health messaging.

Following the January 2020 episodes of *New Amsterdam*, *Chicago Med* and *Grey's Anatomy* that each included plots involving adolescents with vaping-associated lung-injury, also known as EVALI, at least 641 tweets commented on the shows and e-cigarettes. Nearly half the tweets commented on the storylines' realism and 23.1% expressed enjoyment of the storyline, though a sizeable minority commented that the shows weren't realistic in part because they didn't involve cannabis oil-containing e-cigarettes. About 12% of the tweets expressed knowledge about vaping and 4.4% mentioned behavior, including intention to quit vaping.

"Given the rapid increase in e-cigarette use among U.S. adolescents, it is vital for [public health](#) professionals to develop ways in which to effectively communicate the harms of vaping to [young people](#)," said lead author Beth Hoffman, Ph.D., M.P.H., postdoctoral researcher at Pitt Public Health's Department of Behavioral and Community Health. "Our analysis suggests that primetime television may be a powerful way to positively shape viewers' knowledge about the dangers associated with e-cigarette use."

More information: Beth L. Hoffman et al, Viewer Reactions to EVALI Storylines on Popular Medical Dramas: A Thematic Analysis of Twitter Messages, *Journal of Health Communication* (2023). [DOI: 10.1080/10810730.2023.2201814](https://doi.org/10.1080/10810730.2023.2201814)

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