



Parental Use of Electronic Cigarettes

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Abstract

Objective

To describe parental use of electronic cigarettes (e-cigs) to better understand the safety risks posed to children.

Methods

Between June 24 and November 6, 2014, parents completed a self-administered paper survey during an office visit to 15 pediatric practices in a Midwestern practice-based research network. Attitudes towards and use of e-cigs are reported for those aware of e-cigs before the survey.

Results

Ninety-five percent (628 of 658) of respondents were aware of e-cigs. Of these, 21.0% (130 of 622) had tried e-cigs at least once, and 12.3% (77) reported e-cig use by ≥ 1 person in their household (4.0% exclusive e-cig use, 8.3% dual use with regular cigarettes). An additional 17.3% (109) reported regular cigarette use. Most respondents from e-cig-using homes did not think e-cigs were addictive (36.9% minimally or not addictive, 25.0% did not know). While 73.7% believed that e-liquid was very dangerous for children if they ingested it, only 31.2% believed skin contact to be very dangerous. In 36.1% of e-cig-using homes, neither childproof caps nor locks were used to prevent children's access to e-liquid. Only 15.3% reported their child's pediatrician was aware of e-cig use in the home.

Conclusions

E-cig use occurred in 1 in 8 homes, often concurrently with regular cigarettes. Many parents who used e-cigs were unaware of the potential health and safety hazards, including nicotine poisoning for children, and many did not store e-liquid safely. Pediatricians could provide education about e-cig associated safety hazards but are unaware of e-cig use in their patient's homes.