



Question

Should I recommend that patients use electronic cigarettes ("e-cigarettes") as a tool to complete smoking cessation?

Answer

No, we do not recommend the use of e-cigarettes as a tool to complete smoking cessation.

Background

- **Article Title:** "Electronic Nicotine-Delivery Systems for Smoking Cessation"
- **Journal:** *The New England Journal of Medicine*
- **Publication Date:** February 15, 2024
- **Abstract Summary:** With funding from the Swiss government, an open-label randomized controlled trial concluded that the use of e-cigarettes as a tool for complete smoking cessation alongside standard smoking cessation treatment was more effective than standard treatment alone. At six months, biochemically validated continuous abstinence from smoking was 28.9% in the intervention group and 16.3% in the control group (RR = 1.77; 95% CI = 1.43-2.20) with similar serious adverse event profiles in both groups.

Analysis

- **Positive Findings:** E-cigarette usage decreased total nicotine usage.
- **Study Concerns:** Experimental and control groups were not suitably matched (e.g., the experimental group was given free e-cigarettes with optional, not-free nicotine replacement therapy while the control group was given \$50 that could be used towards nicotine replacement therapy). Additionally, nicotine abstinence rates (i.e., no use of tobacco cigarettes, e-cigarettes with nicotine, and nicotine-replacement therapy) were higher in the control group.
- **Other Concerns:** Long-term data on safety of e-cigarettes remains unknown.

Bottom Line

A large Swiss study found that e-cigarettes increased smoking cessation, but due to the study's potential methodological bias and the overall lack of long-term safety data on e-cigarettes, we are unlikely to recommend the use of e-cigarettes as a tool for patients looking to quit smoking.