PSU Tobacco Policy Work Group Position Statement – Electronic cigarettes

May 15, 2014

In July of 2015, Pittsburg State University will implement a tobacco-free policy which will prohibit the use of all tobacco products on PSU property. The inclusion of electronic cigarettes (also known as e-cigarettes, e-hookah, vapors, vaporizers, or nicotine vaporizers) within the policy has been questioned, and this statement has been developed by the Tobacco Policy Work Group to serve as a unified recommendation for the use of e-cigarettes.

Electronic cigarettes, “E-cigarettes”, are battery-operated devices designed to look like and to be used in the same manner as conventional cigarettes. Most forms of e-cigarettes contain nicotine as a component, which is derived from the processing of tobacco. Sold online and in many retail shopping facilities, the devices generally contain cartridges filled with nicotine, flavor, and other chemicals. They turn nicotine, which is highly addictive, and other chemicals into a vapor that is inhaled by the user. Currently, e-cigarettes can be sold without any legal age restrictions, and are available in different flavors (such as chocolate, strawberry and mint) which may appeal to young people. In addition, the devices do not contain any health warnings comparable to FDA-approved nicotine replacement products or conventional cigarettes.

While opinions are varied, scientific research has yet to reveal:

- the potential risks of e-cigarettes when used as intended,
- how much nicotine or other potentially harmful chemicals are being inhaled during use,
- whether there are any benefits associated with using these products,
- long-term impact of this discharged vapor, both on the smoker and on bystanders.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has joined other health experts to warn consumers about the potential health risks associated with electronic cigarettes. FDA has not evaluated any e-cigarettes for safety or effectiveness. When the FDA conducted limited laboratory studies of certain samples, they found significant quality issues that indicate that quality control processes used to manufacture these products are substandard or non-existent. They also found that cartridges labeled as containing no nicotine contained nicotine and that three different electronic cigarette cartridges with the same label emitted a markedly different amount of nicotine with each puff. Experts have also raised concerns that the marketing of products such as e-cigarettes can increase nicotine addiction among young people.

Some of these FDA agency concerns include:

- e-cigarettes can increase nicotine addiction among young people and may lead kids to try other tobacco products, including conventional cigarettes, which are known to cause disease and lead to premature death,
• the products may contain ingredients that are known to be toxic to humans
• because clinical studies about the safety and efficacy of these products for their intended use has not been submitted to FDA, consumers have no way of knowing:
  o whether e-cigarettes are safe for their intended use,
  o what types or concentrations of potentially harmful chemicals, or what dose of nicotine they are inhaling when they use these products

On April 24th, 2014, the Food and Drug Administration announced a proposed rule that would extend the agency’s tobacco authority to cover additional products that meet the legal definition of a tobacco product, such as e-cigarettes. The proposal would also require any new e-cigarettes to get FDA approval before being sold, and demand that current products provide a justification for remaining on the market. The FDA also is proposing regulation of a variety of other tobacco-related products, including cigars, nicotine gels, pipe tobacco and water pipes.

After analyzing the results of numerous research studies and information provided by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Tobacco Policy Work Group has concluded that insufficient information is currently available to justify exempting the e-cigarette from the University’s tobacco-free policy at this time. This recommendation includes the use of electronic cigarettes, vapor products and other alternative nicotine products not approved by the FDA. Until FDA approval is granted, these will not be allowed on campus, which is consistent with national standards and guidelines. Should these tobacco products become FDA approved in the future, we will reexamine the acceptable use of these products with in the university policy.

Signed,

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