Electronic Cigarettes as a Smoking Cessation Tool

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ABSTRACT: Electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) are an alternative nicotine delivery system that has rapidly gained popularity in recent years. Electronic cigarettes resemble traditional cigarettes but differ in that the former vaporizes nicotine into an aerosol, whereas the latter combusts nicotine into smoke. Consequently, many consumers believe that electronic cigarettes are safer and healthier than traditional cigarettes. Despite this perception, the health effects of e-cigarettes are still largely unknown. E-cigarettes have, however, been shown to be a modestly effective smoking cessation tool. My claim in this paper is that public health organizations have an obligation to intervene with e-cigarette advertisements because they make it difficult for individuals and consumers to make rational decisions. The desired public health behavior is to help smokers quit by switching to e-cigarettes while also limiting the number of nonsmoker who begin using ecigarettes. I will argue that public health organizations have a duty to intervene with electronic cigarette advertisements on Kantian grounds. I will conclude that public health institutions have an obligation to prevent harm caused because of the ways in which this advertising violates the dignity and rational agency of the nonsmokers.