



## The e-cigarettes ban in India: an important public health decision

In the interest of public health, electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) were banned in September, 2019, by the Indian Government. Indeed, concerns around the use of e-cigarettes have been mounting worldwide.<sup>1</sup> Beyond the issue of nicotine addiction, the ingredients used in flavouring agents and additive agents, like propylene glycol and vegetable glycerin, can also be harmful for health. When heated, these additive agents can produce various compounds, including formaldehyde and acetaldehyde, which are carcinogenic to humans.<sup>2,3</sup> Disposal of waste from e-cigarettes and the manufacture of e-cigarettes could also pose potential environmental hazards.

Notably, increased e-cigarettes use among adolescents has been a particular concern,<sup>4</sup> and severe lung disease has been associated with the use of e-cigarettes in the USA.<sup>5</sup>

The Indian Council of Medical Research, through its white paper on e-cigarettes, recommended that e-cigarettes be completely prohibited in India; this recommendation was made in the interest of protecting public health and in accordance with the precautionary principle of preventing harm.<sup>6</sup> The white paper stressed how harmful for health the use of e-cigarettes can be.

In India, before the 2019 ban, the health authorities did not permit the use of e-cigarettes for pleasure, nor for smoking cessation. However, e-cigarette products have gradually entered the Indian market through various forms of marketing strategies to consumers. There are several alarming media reports of e-cigarette use among adolescents in India.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the ban, Indian authorities are struggling to regulate the use of e-cigarettes, in particular due to black market.<sup>7</sup> This is threatening the country's efforts to control tobacco.

The 2019 ban was a right, timely, and important public health decision, but preventing use of e-cigarettes, especially in adolescents, still remains a challenge and more needs to be done.

We declare no competing interests.

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