Preliminary results and lessons learned from survey measures and focus groups on adults’ perceived risks and benefits of using e-cigarettes

Martha C. Engstrom, MS
Assistant Director, Research
Georgia State University School of Public Health
GSU Tobacco Center of Regulatory Science
Research: Risk Perception of Novel Products

- Georgia State University
  - PI: Michael Eriksen, PhD

- Focusing on novel products, including e-cigarettes and little cigars
- Utilizing surveys, focus groups, and key informant interviews to ultimately create a media campaign prototype to be delivered to the FDA
Our Approach to E-Cigs

Here are descriptions and pictures of some products that we will be asking questions about in the rest of this survey.

In this survey, “e-cigarette” is a general term. It includes electronic cigarettes (products that look like regular cigarettes and deliver nicotine, but are battery-powered and produce vapor), disposable nicotine delivery products, reusable and refillable nicotine delivery products, vape pens, vape pipes, hookah pens, e-hookah, and e-tanks.
2014 Tobacco Products & Perceptions Survey

METHODS

- Cross-sectional, online survey
- Probability sample of US adults 18 and older
  - Oversample of smokers
- June - July 2014
- 5717 completes
When you hear the word *cigarette*, what is the first thought or image that comes to mind? Please list just one thought or image.
When you hear the word **e-cigarette**, what is the first thought or image that comes to mind? Please list just one thought or image.
2014 Survey Findings

"Is using e-cigarettes less harmful, about the same, or more harmful than smoking regular cigarettes?"

- 35.1% I don't know
- 33.8% Less harmful
- 28.3% About as harmful
- 2.6% More harmful
"Do you think that breathing vapor from other people's e-cigarettes is not at all harmful to one's health, somewhat harmful to one's health, or very harmful to one's health?"
2014 Tobacco Products & Perceptions Survey
Our LESSONS LEARNED

- “I Don’t Know”
- Meaningful/Important
- Valid/”True” based on the current science
2014 E-Cigarette Focus Groups
EXAMPLE Q’s

- What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you see or hear the words “e-cigarettes”?
- “using e-cigarettes”
- cigarettes
2014 E-Cigarette Focus Groups
EXAMPLE Q’s

ASK PARTICIPANTS IN GROUP TO PULL OUT THEIR MOST RECENT PACKAGE OF E-CIGS THAT THEY PURCHASED

➢ What is appealing to you about this e-cigarette product? its packaging?
➢ When you look at the packaging, what messages do you get from it?
2014 E-Cigarette Focus Groups
Our LESSONS LEARNED

- Having participants bring their own products is a great way to hear from them why their products appeal to them
2014 E-Cigarette Focus Groups
EXAMPLE Q’s

- What are the benefits of using e-cigarettes to you?
  - What are the downsides?
- What are the benefits of using BOTH e-cigarettes and cigarettes to you?
  - What are the downsides?
2014 E-Cigarette Focus Groups
EXAMPLE Q’s

- What does the word “risk” mean to you
  *Provide participants with a list of products and ask them to rank the products from most to least “risky”*
  - Chewing tobacco, Cigarettes, E-cigarettes, Little cigars/cigarillos, Hookahs

- What does the work “harm” mean to you?
  *Repeat exercise above for “harm”*
2014 E-Cigarette Focus Groups
Our LESSONS LEARNED

- “Risk” and “Harm” are not synonymous to participants
  - Risk: legal risk, chance, indefinite/intangible
  - Harm: definite

- Important to assess
  - Absolute & Relative Risk
  - Absolute & Relative Harm
2014 E-Cigarette Focus Groups
Our LESSONS LEARNED

- Not only important to assess WHAT products are being used, but also..

- HOW those products are being used
  - Dual use/poly use?
  - NOT just use of e-cigarettes by regular cigarette smokers

- What are users of tank systems putting in their tanks? -- not always nicotine
It’s a Fan!

It’s a Wall!

It’s a Spear!

It’s a Rope!

It’s a Snake!

It’s a Tree!
Acknowledgements

• GSU RO1 Research Team (in alphabetical order)
  Kay Beck, PhD; Shanta Dube, PhD, MPH; Martha Engstrom, MS; Cathy Kemp, MA; Ban Majeed, MBChB, MPH; Meghan Nix, MPH; Amy Nyman, MA; Pam Redmon, MPH; Kym Sterling, PhD; Elizabeth Strickler, MFA; Michael Tannebaum, MA; Scott Weaver, PhD; Colin Wheeler, MFA

• Decision Research
  Paul Slovic, PhD; Melissa Finucane, PhD

• Porter Novelli