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Reasons for e- cigarette use among US middle and high school students: The National Youth Tobacco Survey 2016

The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has published "Reasons for Electronic Cigarette Use Among Middle and High School Students—National Youth Tobacco Survey, United States, 2016." The article, by authors J Tsai, K Walton and BN Coleman, et al., discusses findings of the 2016 [United States] National Youth Tobacco Survey (NYTS), which were analyzed by the CDC and the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The following is a summary of the article with excerpted text and original references.

Methods

The National Youth Tobacco Survey (NYTS) is a pencil-and-paper questionnaire, self-administered in schools to a cross-sectional, nationally representative sample of students in grades 6-12 in the United States.[3] In 2016, 20,675 students completed the NYTS, with an overall response rate of 71.6%. Reasons for e-cigarette use among both ever and current e-cigarette users were studied. A variety of participants were excluded, including those who had never tried an e-cigarette or had missing information. Results from the remaining 4,049 ever users, including 1,281 current users, were analyzed.

Results

The most commonly selected reasons for e-cigarette use were 1) use by "friend or family member" (39.0%); 2) availability of "flavors such as mint, candy, fruit or chocolate" (31.0%); and 3) the belief that "they are less harmful than other forms of tobacco such as cigarettes" (17.1%). The least commonly selected reasons were 1) "they are easier to get than other tobacco products, such as cigarettes" (4.8%); 2) "they cost less than other tobacco products such as cigarettes" (3.2%); and 3) "famous people on TV or in movies use them" (1.5%). Availability of flavors as a reason for use was more commonly selected by high school users (32.3%) than by middle school users (26.8%). In 2016, e-cigarettes were the most common tobacco product used among adolescents, although the overall prevalence of use declined from previous years.[1, 8] In previous studies, availability of flavors was among the most cited reasons for e-cigarette use.[4, 5]

Discussion

Recent research has indicated that e-cigarette use declined among adolescent students in 2016, probably due in part to population-based efforts to prevent youths' e-cigarette initiation and use.[1, 9] The Surgeon General has noted that population-level strategies include incorporating e-cigarettes into smoke-free indoor air policies, restricting youths' access to e-cigarettes in retail settings, licensing retailers and establishing specific package requirements.[2]

The article also indicated that "comprehensive strategies to prevent and reduce the use of all tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, among US youths are warranted.[2] Regulation of manufacturing, distribution and marketing of tobacco products by the FDA, along with sustained implementation of comprehensive tobacco control and prevention strategies, could reduce youths' e-cigarette initiation and use.[2, 7] In addition, continued monitoring of e-cigarette use, including reasons for use and product characteristics, is important to guide strategies to prevent and reduce use of e-cigarettes among youths."

References

The first reference is for the original article. The ten subsequent references were cited within the original article as well as in this article.

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