

Statement of the Catalan Network of Smoke-free Hospitals and the Network of Primary Care on the use of electronic cigarettes in health centers

In recent months the presence and marketing of electronic cigarettes (electronic devices vaporizing nicotine or other substances like a cigarettes) has increased in our environment. Besides the possibility of internet shopping, different specialized establishments are offering these devices, using mixed or scarcely proven messages about their safety, risk reduction compared with cigarettes, their usefulness as a method to reduce or quit tobacco or quit smoking and the possibility to use them in places where smoking is prohibited by law.

The use of electronic cigarettes in places where smoking is prohibited may cause confusion because of its resemblance to traditional cigarettes, the emission of “vapor” similar to secondhand smoke and may compromise the “denormalization” of tobacco consumption achieved in the last decade thanks to the different tobacco control measures.

Due to the recent emergence of electronic cigarettes, there is not enough conclusive evidence for or against the use of these devices:

- Preliminary studies indicate that electronic cigarettes are probably less toxic than conventional cigarettes, but there is still no evidence of its usefulness as a possible strategy for harm reduction.
- Despite their increasing use, there is no scientific evidence of its effectiveness as a method smoking cessation. Currently, controlled clinical trials are in progress.
- No conclusive evidence for or against the safety of their use, especially long-term, or the potential effects of passive exposure to aerosols generated by electronic cigarettes.
- The liquids used in these devices are not regulated. For this reason there is much variability in the content of them between different brands and within the same brand. Therefore, currently there is no guarantee to consumers that some liquids may contain unidentified toxic impurities or labeling.

All the above considered, together with the existing loophole, the Catalan Network of Smoke-free Hospitals and Primary Care recommend that hospitals, health centers and other healthcare facilities:

- Prohibit by internal regulation the use of electronic cigarettes on their premises, both in enclosed places (buildings) and outdoors, similar to that established in the current legislation (Law 42/2010) of sanitary measures to control tobacco snuff products.
- Prohibit by regulation for internal system sale, promotion or advertising of these devices in their units, similar to that established in the current Spanish smoke-free legislation (Law 42/2010).

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