



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Press Statement

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Ban E-Cigarettes and Vaping devices

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) calls upon the government to impose a blanket ban on e-cigarettes and vaping devices (EVC). The U.S. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention reported that of the 805 vaping-related lung illnesses there were 12 deaths reported across the U.S.^[1]

Currently more than 40 countries have banned vaping while many European countries including Austria, Belgium, Germany and Italy classified e-cigarettes as tobacco products, subjecting them to strict control.^[2] In Asia, Thailand banned vaping since 2014; Singapore, February 2018; and more recently India, September 2019.

We have a ticking time-bomb in our midst. There are an estimated 1 million vapers in Malaysia and about 10% of whom are minors.^[3] A 2017 study conducted in Malaysia revealed that 54% of these vapers interviewed obtained their zero nicotine e-liquid from the black market; 30% obtained home-made e-liquid.

“Malaysia may be on the edge of a possible public health crisis if there are cases of unreported vaping-related lung diseases. Tracing the source of the cause would then be a horrendous nightmare. Unlike in the US, here in Malaysia, the health authorities have not set up a system to check if there are similar undetected vaping-related cases in the country. This is where the danger lurks. The government must short-circuit the problem before it gets out of hand,” said the President of the CAP, Mr Mohideen Abdul Kader.

In a recent CAP survey involving 1,000 primary and secondary students on EVC and smoking we found that students were forming groups of six to 10 and naming themselves after e-liquids. They would meet at hypermarkets and supermarkets near the schools and collect money weekly to buy e-liquids.

Some of the students become sales agents in return for free e-liquids or discounts on the products.^[4]

It is misleading and untrue to claim that vaping is a less dangerous alternative to smoking because vaping may cause lung diseases such as emphysema and obliterative bronchiolitis (‘popcorn lungs’).^[5] Obliterative bronchiolitis is the scarring and narrowing of the airways by the chemical diacetyl found in some e-liquids. This disease is irreversible.

A study in 2015 revealed that diacetyl was discovered in 39 (76.5%) out of 51 e-liquids and, at that point in time, there were more than 7,000 e-cigarette flavours in the U.S. market.^[6] Diacetyl is used in a wide range of different flavoured e-cigarette products, ranging from vanilla to caramel and coconut. Furthermore, in 2017, U.S. researchers discovered proteins in the airways of e-cigarette smokers that

are known to contribute to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Markers of oxidative stress associated with lung disease showed up in all the participants of this study.^[7] Oxidative stress is an imbalance of free radicals and antioxidants in the body which can lead to cell and tissue damage.

We would like to highlight the fact that vaping involves the use of an e-liquid (and refills are available when the original e-liquid has finished) for the vaping devices. Little is known about the long-term effects of the chemicals found in e-liquids.

The Food and Drugs Administration of the U.S. classified the chemicals used in e-liquid only with respect to food grade but not on the effect of the aerosol produced by them on lungs from vaping.

There have also been cases of exploding e-cigarette devices and there may be other similar cases that have gone unreported. Despite this, there have been no product recall of the device from the market issued by the government.

We iterate our call for e-cigarettes and vaping devices to be banned because of their health risks, the proliferation of use among minors, and a waste of money spending on a chemical addiction. It is also the road to tobacco smoking addiction. For the Health Ministry, it is a financial burden to the country to treat people who had developed vaping-related diseases which could be avoided.

Mohideen Abdul Kader
President
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^[1] Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. Outbreak of Lung Injury Associated with E-Cigarette Use, or Vaping (27 September 2019). https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/severe-lung-disease.html

^[2] The Washington Post. Keep calm and vape on: UK embraces e-cigarettes, US cautious. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/v>

^[3] The Star. Vaping craze a booming business (28 Jun 2015). <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2015/06/28/vaping-craze-a-booming-business/>

^[4] The Star. E-cig and vape traders 'using students as agents' (20 Aug 2019) <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2019/08/20/e-cig-and-vape-traders-using-students-as-agents>

^[5] Medical News Today. Jennifer Huizen. What's to know about popcorn lung? (13 March 2018)

^[6] Environmental Health Perspectives, Vol. 124, No. 6, 1 June 2016. Flavoring Chemicals in E-Cigarettes: Diacetyl, 2,3-Pentanedione, and Acetoin in a Sample of 51 Products, Including Fruit-, Candy-, and Cocktail-Flavored E-Cigarettes. <https://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/doi/10.1289/ehp.1510185>

^[7] Medical News Today. Jayne Leonard. Can vaping cause lung problems? (29 May 2018) <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/321960.php>