

E-Cigarettes in India: An Overview

Karishma Rathore¹, Debasruti Naik², Stithaprajna Lenka³, Dharmashree Satyarup⁴, Nikita Sahu⁵

¹Tutor, ²Senior Lecturer, Department of Public Health Dentistry, ³Professor, Department of Oral Surgery, ⁴Professor, ⁵Tutor, Department of Public Health Dentistry, Institute of Dental Sciences, Siksha 'O' Anusandhan (Deemed to be University), Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

Abstract

Knowing its harmful effects, e-cigarettes are still famous among all the tobacco consumers. E-Cigarettes however wanted to capture the market in India also since 2016 but has failed to make its mark because of the prompt action by the government as compared to the scenario in the western countries. This article will provide the knowledge and information regarding E-Cigarettes legalization and utilization in India.

Keywords: E-Cigarettes, Harmful effects, Government actions in India.

Introduction

The undesirable special effects of cigarette smoking on the physical condition was first acknowledged by the Advisory Committee to the U.S. Surgeon General in 1964. The electronic cigarette (e-cigarette) is a type of new-fangled class of electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) that was introduced in 2004 globally.¹ Gradually E-Cigarettes became the most trending and used product among tobacco users all over the world covering many countries worldwide. It is more common in youth and tobacco product users. Knowing its harmful effects, e-cigarettes are still famous among all the tobacco consumers. E-Cigarettes however wanted to capture the market in India also since 2016 but has failed to make its mark because of the prompt action by the government as compared to the scenario in the western countries. This article will provide the knowledge and information regarding E-Cigarettes legalization and utilization in India.²

Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) have a special form of cigarettes called E-Cigarettes which is the most common form.³ These cigarettes are chiefly a kind of device that is used by not burning any tobacco leaves rather than it is vaporized with a mixture by utilizing a battery. And then this mist is being breathed by the cigarette.⁴

“The main constituents of the solution, in addition to nicotine when nicotine is present, are propylene glycol, with or without glycerol and flavoring agents,” as reported by the World Health Organisation (WHO) with the aim of these constituents inside the E- cigar contains many toxic substances.⁵ Most of the E-cigarettes come in various shapes and sizes but it will resemble as ordinary cigarettes, cigars as well as smoking pipes but now within late brands, designer E-cigarette is in the market that resembles like whistles or pens.⁶

Working mechanism of an E-Cigarette: E-Cigarettes depends on many factors such as the characteristics of the unit circuit, liquid mixtures used, and the user's behavior as well as the battery's strength for better efficiency. The effectiveness of e-cigarettes is directly proportional to the manufactured goods capability to heat the solution to a state so that it can transform into vapors. And the end product is the crucial components like circuit strength and the battery's voltage. The solution will be faster in heating up vaporize if the voltage and circuit are stronger.⁷

Corresponding Author:

Debasruti Naik

Senior Lecturer, Department of Public Health Dentistry, Institute of Dental Sciences, Siksha 'O' Anusandhan (Deemed to be University), Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

e-mail: smilewithdebsruti@gmail.com

“Battery voltage and unit circuitry differences can result in considerable variability in the products’ ability to heat the solution to an aerosol and, consequently, may affect the delivery of nicotine and other constituents, and may contribute to the formation of toxicants in the emissions,” as reported by WHO in the year 2014 which describes that factors such as “length of puffs, depth of inhalation and frequency of use” might have an effect on nicotine being utilized by consuming e-cigarettes.⁸

E-Cigarette aerosol composition: The aerosol produced by the e-cigarette aerosol and the users keep breathing those aerosols from the piece of equipment and then breathe out which contains many injurious as well as potentially detrimental substances, plus substance like Nicotine, very ultrafine particles which can be breath in deep into lungs, it also contains volatile organic compounds as well as cancer-causing chemicals along with few heavy metals such as tin, nickel, and lead. Sometimes it is difficult for the consumers to know the correct composition of E-Cigarettes as they are often commercially marketed as zero percent nicotine but are bring into being to have nicotine in it.⁹

Harmful Effects of E-Cigarettes: WHO reported that it can have unsympathetic effects during pregnancy and may contribute to cardiovascular disease.¹⁰ Nicotine itself is not a carcinogen but it may function as a tumor promoter. Nicotine seems concerned with fundamental aspects of the biology of malignant diseases, as well as of neurodegeneration.¹¹

Facts: Mostly E-Cigarettes are frequently used by the youths among the tobacco products. More than the adults, youths are being affected in the countries. According to reports, 58.8 % of adults are the users of the e-cigarette were mostly of aged 45 years and older. Many of them were current or former cigarette smokers.¹²

Indian Market Scenario: The estimated value of E-cigarette was very high in the industrial market. According to global market reports, there are as many as more than 466 brands for e-cigarettes production but the Indian market has fewer numbers out of that.¹³ According to the market research organization, they have estimated that by the year 2030 the global e-cigarette would rise high more than four times the current production as well as consumption. Therefore, based on that report, the Indian market scenario was also expected to take a rise in its consumption but because of the government abrupt decision towards the banning of e-cigarettes it is still in

a very controversial estimated topic. The most popular variety of e-cigarette ENDS is the most commonly used product across the globe as reported by WHO IN 2014.¹⁴

The central government informed the parliament of India that between the years 2016 and 2019, most of the e-cigarettes were imported more than 19 crores.¹⁵ The chief supplier of these e-cigarettes were mostly from countries like China, Hong Kong, the US, and Germany. According to the market reports, the school going students are more affected and excited about using this new variant of e-cigarette and that is why the consumption rate of e-cigarette has grown among these teenagers including high school students.¹⁶

Fines under the new law: The provisions are being made by the Indian Government after the prohibition of this e-cigarette was made considering its production, manufacturing, importing, exporting and transport, sale, distribution, storage, and advertisement.¹⁷

1. If anybody in India will be recognized for production, manufacturing, importing, exporting, transporting, and sale including online sale too, it will become a cognizable offense that will be meant for punishment under the law of Indian government.¹⁸
2. One year of imprisonment or a fine of Rs 1 lakh or might be both for the first offense will be applicable as a punishment as decided by the law of the Indian government.
3. If someone is caught in commencing the offense again then the punishment will be extended upto 3 years with a fine of Rs 5 lakhs.¹⁹
4. If anybody is found in storing the e-cigarettes will get a punishment of imprisonment up to 6 months or a fine of Rs 50,000 or maybe both.²⁰
5. Persons who have already the storage of e-cigarettes have to declare as well as the deposit of the stocks of e-cigarettes to their nearest police station on their own as soon as possible after this ordinance comes into effect.²¹

At the present scenario, the Indian Government has declared to stop the sale, storage space as well as production of e-cigarettes in India. This decision was being moved by the Union Finance Minister of India, Nirmala Sitharaman who said that the decision of banning e-cigarettes was taken as per the union recommendations of a Group of Ministers (GoM), which was headed by her.²²

As soon as the commencement of the ban on e-cigarettes comes into force, immediately all the activities related to e-cigarettes like production, manufacturing, consumption, sale, exporting and importing, distribution, storage, and its advertisement would become illegal in India.^{23,24}

Giving justification on the ban of e-cigarettes the union minister of India said that E-cigarettes were being promoted as a way to search out people out of their smoking habits but reports have shown that many people are not using it as weaning mechanism but are rather addicted to it. The government justified its decision of banning e-cigarettes from the country as e-cigarettes are more vulnerable to health hazards and this decision will also protect the youth of its country.²⁵

As soon as the parliament of India passes the bill on banning e-cigarettes, 15 states and one Union territory immediately had taken action on this and had banned e-cigarettes. These include Karnataka, Punjab, Mizoram, Kerala, Bihar, Jammu & Kashmir, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Odisha [26]. So, the purpose of the government has been to zip the problem in the bud itself,” as reported by the union minister of India.²⁷

“You see, in a country as vast as India, once a particular product has a very big consumer base and social acceptance, it is very, very difficult to ban it,” the health minister of India Dr. Harsh Vardhan once said in a television interview in the late 2019. Because many opposition political parties were also opposing on banning e-cigarettes as they were only focusing on the economic growth and the profits the industries could make from these e-cigarettes business and forgot about the harmful health hazards of the tobacco product.²⁸

Outcome on Ban of e-cigarettes in India: With the ban on e-cigarettes in India, it has unexpectedly benefitted the traditional tobacco or cigarette companies in India like ITC and Godfrey Philips. These companies were facing competition from e-cigarettes in the tobacco market in India. “Why ban when you can tax (heavily)? Banning e-cigarettes while keeping tobacco products is bizarre. Neither health nor fiscal grounds for this decision, so what’s the logic,” as reported by a member of the Prime Minister’s Economic Advisory Council.²⁹

Conclusion

The Indian Government has taken a significant decision on e-cigarettes. It has taken care of the health hazards of its people as mostly the adults as well as the high school going students in India have started getting addicted to this new variant of e-cigarettes. Therefore, new research is needed to be conducted in the future in this field as no doubt e-cigarettes are an option for a replacement for traditional cigarettes but its harmful hazards towards health cannot be overlooked.

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