



COUNCIL 2018-19

Legislative Council

Attention: the Chairman and Clerk to Panel on Health Services

Email: panel_hs@legco.gov.hk

June 15, 2018

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**Legislative Proposal to Regulate Electronic Cigarettes and
heat-not-burn (HNB) tobacco products**

Dear Sir,

The Hong Kong College of Community Medicine (HKCCM) writes to express our views regarding Government's legislative proposal to regulate e-cigarettes and heat-not-burn (HNB) tobacco products.

E-cigarettes are definitely not harmless. Local and overseas studies have shown beyond doubt that the chemical mixture in e-cigarettes contains a host of carcinogens and toxic substances. Their long-term use will likely increase the risk of cancer, respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. Importantly, the perceived reduced exposure to toxic substances contained in e-cigarettes may not translate to reduced health risks compared to traditional cigarettes.

HNB products comprise tobacco leaves themselves and they contain chemicals present in traditional cigarettes to a varying degree. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there is no evidence to demonstrate that HNB tobacco products are less harmful than conventional tobacco products.

The claim that e-cigarettes and HNB products aid smokers to quit is misleading. The scientific evidence is scant and the WHO advocates against the use of such products as smoking cessation tools. The fact remains that there are other safe and well-established methods to help smokers quit, like nicotine replacement therapy.

A particularly worrying trend is the targeting of young people in promoting e-cigarettes and HNB products. A local survey found an alarming rate of 9% of secondary school students reported ever-using e-cigarettes. E-cigarettes users are more likely in turn to take up the smoking habit later in life.



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In accordance with WHO recommendations, a growing number of countries have introduced laws to regulate and prohibit e-cigarettes and HNB products. Hong Kong is in real danger lagging behind internationally in this development; for example, Singapore and Macao have imposed a complete ban on e-cigarettes.

The HKCCM considers that a total ban on e-cigarettes and HNB products is the most desirable strategy to protect public health. As the HKSARG presents its legislative proposal to regulate e-cigarettes and HNB products, we expect a clear explanation on its rationale (as opposed to the original legislative proposal in 2015) and an evaluation mechanism to monitor performance. The bottom line is, the status quo is not acceptable. Further inaction against the escalating threat of e-cigarettes and HNB products may in a few years' time result in a reversal of the downward trend in smoking, ultimately sacrificing the health of our citizens.

Yours sincerely,

Dr TSANG ho-fai Thomas

President, Hong Kong College of Community Medicine