



# Global Center for Good Governance in Tobacco Control

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BLOG

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## **New Tobacco Products Are Not the Answer to Cessation<sup>i</sup>**

**Dr Judith Mackay, Special Advisor, GGTC**

Over the last half century, the tobacco industry has put enormous efforts into opposing tobacco control legislation and taxation, yet has done little to oppose cessation.

There are several reasons for their historical absence from the issue.

First, they would have to address the 1994 record of tobacco industry executives swearing under oath that nicotine is not addictive.<sup>ii</sup> Yet as early as 1962, they knew nicotine was addictive.<sup>iii</sup> The industry's denial attempted to shift the responsibility of smoking or quitting onto smokers themselves. It also cruelly ignored the real struggle that many addicted smokers – their customers – were experiencing in quitting.

Tobacco is addictive. The evidence-based World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), now adopted by 182 governments, states this many times. An entire Article (14), elaborated in [Guidelines](#), is devoted to help smokers quit.<sup>iv</sup>

Second, the industry wishes to ignore calls for the tobacco companies to [compensate for the damage caused by tobacco](#), and to fund tobacco control, including cessation programs.<sup>v</sup> This is based on the Polluter Pays principle – ‘you caused the problem – you pay for the damage caused.’ The industry does not want to see this Pandora's box opened, as it could expose them to massive costs for health care, millions of premature annual deaths and illnesses. Some public health organizations or governments are already pursuing this approach.<sup>vi</sup> As might be expected fighting the tobacco industry, these cases are bogged down by years of legal challenges and expenses. Even these cases do not begin to address [economic and environmental costs](#), such as fires, litter, pollution of our oceans by discarded cigarette ends, and lost productivity.

Third, cessation programs are the caring face of public health authorities, and are appreciated by smokers. Much of tobacco control is framed around legislation and taxation, which some wrongly

feel are punitive towards smokers (whereas in fact, they are designed to help and protect smokers and non-smokers alike). Cessation shows the authorities directly helping smokers overcome an expensive, dirty and dangerous addiction, which most would prefer to quit.

Industry tactics are subtly changing, particularly in 2021 centered around WHO World Tobacco Day's theme of Cessation, to promote its so-called 'harm reduction' products like E-cigarettes and Heated Tobacco Products.

*The industry claims that these “harm reduction products, including snus, e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products, are more effective means of quitting than the use of NRTs [nicotine replacement therapy, and substantially lower exposure to harmful products of combustion seen in cigarettes and bidis.”<sup>vii</sup>*

In contrast, WHO's 2020 expert committee on Tobacco Product Regulation highlighted the 'addictive potential' of the new products, and recommended taking measures against e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products.<sup>viii</sup> For WNTD, WHO also emphasized that [“e-cigarettes are not proven cessation aids.”](#)

HTPs are recognised by World Health Organization (WHO) as tobacco products as harmful to health, addictive and 'undoubtedly unsafe, stating “HTPs expose users to toxic emissions similar to those found in cigarette smoke, many of which can cause cancer.”<sup>ix</sup>

These products are not harmless: a recent Stanford University study found that adolescent vapers are 5-7 times more likely to catch COVID.<sup>x</sup>

Other problems about these new forms of tobacco: the ingredients are unknown and varied; they act as a gateway for youth to move on to smoking combustible cigarettes; they will re-normalize tobacco use, just as cigarette smoking prevalence is falling. The tobacco industry has previously misled smokers by claiming filters and low tar cigarettes were 'safer,' yet this also turned out to be untrue.<sup>xi</sup>

Yet another problem is that these products are accompanied by aggressive advertising, promotion and sponsorship [clearly aimed at youth](#) in order to recruit new users, and not at middle aged smokers to help cessation, as the industry claims.

Low and middle-income countries in particular are struggling to reduce the combustible tobacco epidemic, and can't cope with another add-on epidemic. Thus, more than 40 countries and jurisdictions [have now banned E-cigarettes](#).

And, finally, do these products really help smokers quit?

There is a lack of evidence that they help smokers quit tobacco products; instead they encourage dual use and continuation.<sup>xii</sup>

WHO provides more than 100 positive reasons for quitting – includes many reasons illustrating the duplicity and lies of the industry, stating: <sup>xiii</sup>

‘When you buy tobacco, you are financially supporting an industry that exploits farmers and children and pedals sickness and death.’



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For more information on how the tobacco industry has been undermining cessation, read this [fact sheet](#) and watch this [recorded webinar](#) where the author provided expert insights.

**Other resources on this topic from Dr. Judith Mackay can be found here:**

Mackay, J. (2021). 'Commit to quit' smoking to mark World No Tobacco Day. <https://www.chinadailyhk.com/article/220902#'Commit-to-quit'-smoking-to-mark-World-No-Tobacco-Day>

<https://www.facebook.com/chinadailyhkedition/posts/4447494595275322>

<https://www.facebook.com/chinadailyhkedition/posts/4447502948607820>

### **About the Author**

Named as one of the most influential women in the world, Dr. Judith Mackay is globally recognised as a leading advocate for stricter tobacco control measures and in calling out the tobacco industry for its practices. Dr. Mackay's interests mainly lie in addressing the issues of tobacco in low-income countries, tobacco and women, and challenging the transnational tobacco companies. She is a recipient of the 'Lifetime Achievement Award' by the International Network of Women Against Tobacco (INWAT). She is based in Hong Kong, where she is currently serving as Special Advisor to the Global Center for Good Governance in Tobacco Control (GGTC), which has been designated as the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) Secretariat's Knowledge Hub on Article 5.3

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- <sup>ii</sup> UCSF Academic Senate. Tobacco CEO's Statement to Congress 1994 News Clip "Nicotine is not addictive." 14 April 1994. <https://senate.ucsf.edu/tobacco-ceo-statement-to-congress>
- <sup>iii</sup> Fenn AJ, Schroeter JR. Cigarettes and addiction information: simulating the demand effects of the tobacco industry's 'conspiracy of silence.' *Applied Economics*. Issue: Volume 36, Number 19 / September 20, 2004 Pages: 2151 – 2159. <https://econpapers.repec.org/paper/isugenres/12002.htm>
- <sup>iv</sup> World Health Organization. Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. <https://www.who.int/tobacco/framework/download/en/>
- <sup>v</sup> O'Dowd A. Experts call for tobacco industry to pay for smoking cessation work. *BMJ* 2015;350:h3157. <http://www.bmj.com/content/350/bmj.h3157?etoc=&sso=>
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- <sup>vii</sup> Yach D, Subramaniam C. WHO Doesn't Help You Quit Smoking. *BW Business World*. 16 January 2021. <http://www.businessworld.in/article/WHO-Doesn-t-Help-You-Quit-Smoking/13-01-2021-364782/>
- <sup>viii</sup> WHO. Report on meetings of expert committees and study groups. Report by the Director-General. 23 December 2020. [https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/EBI48/BI48\\_47-en.pdf](https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EBI48/BI48_47-en.pdf)
- <sup>ix</sup> WHO launches reports on novel tobacco products to help bridge gap between science and policy, 25 May 2020. <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/disease-prevention/tobacco/news/news/2020/5/who-launches-reports-on-novel-tobacco-products-to-help-bridge-gap-between-science-and-policy>
- <sup>x</sup> Gaiha SM, Cheng J, Halpern-Felsher B. Association Between Youth Smoking, Electronic Cigarette Use, and COVID-19. *Journal of Adolescent Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2020.07.002>  
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- <sup>xiii</sup> WHO. More than 100 reasons to quit tobacco. <https://www.who.int/news-room/spotlight/more-than-100-reasons-to-quit-tobacco>
- <sup>xiv</sup> UCSF Digital library. Photograph: Nicotine is not addictive. <https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fpublishing.cdlib.org%2Fucpressebooks%2Fview%3FdocId%3Dft167nb0vq%26chunk.id%3Dd0e14164%26toc.depth%3D1%26toc.id%3Dd0e14164%26brand%3Ducpress&psig=AOvYawISw98lxEnkLYtbqVWVud6f&ust=1611545741429000&source=images&cd=vfe&ved=0CAMQjBIqFwoTCN CqveXR-4CFQAAAAAdAAAAABAD>