Health (Tobacco, Nicotine etc. and Care) (Scotland) Bill

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The myths about e-cigarettes and Vaping.

Common myths drive our belief in the safety of the substances we use or are addicted to.

Myths are almost always negative and dangerous because they trap people in their unhealthy habits.

Myths also provide a cost free way to market drugs to the world, so sustaining the profit that can be made from them and they also create the enormous damages to public health that cost the NHS and millions of pounds in taxes.

Those that profit from health myths are the tobacco companies, the alcohol industry, the illegal drugs sellers and the pharmaceutical industry. The government also gains in tax revenues from many of them. 80% of the cost of cigarettes is tax.

I am aware of at least 45 myths, including those below.

My 11 Smoking myths include; "that smoking relaxes you" "that smoking makes you slim" "my smoking is safe because I only smoke when I drink alcohol"

My 10 Alcohol myths include; "that you can drink yourself sober" "that putting vodka in your eye gets you drunk faster" "that men's livers can heal themselves, but women's don't, so that is why men can drink more."

My 15 Drug myths include; "you can drive better after taking cannabis as it relaxes you and makes you more alert" "taking ecstasy tabs is better than taking one" "you are allowed to use legal High's because they are sold legally"

My nine Vaping myths: Vaping is a very new form of drug use, but already the myths are influencing people to use e-cigarettes, the myths I have already collected include;

Myth 1: The nicotine in e-cigarettes is different from the nicotine in tobacco cigarettes.

Myth 2: There is only Nicotine in e-cigarettes not all the dodgy chemicals to be found in tobacco cigarettes.

Myth 3: That using e-cigarettes is 95% safer than smoking tobacco.

Myth 4: That using e-cigarettes is 1,000 times safer than smoking tobacco.

Myth 5: That Vaping is safe.

Myth 6: That Vaping is the most successful way to quit smoking.
Myth 7: That it is almost impossible to stop smoking but Vaping makes it possible.

Myth 8: That cost of Vaping is about a third of what it costs to smoke tobacco.

Myth 9: That the government approves of Vaping so it must be safe.

Let's look at the facts, myth by myth.

Myth 1: The nicotine in e-cigarettes is different from the nicotine in tobacco cigarettes.

For decades the government has told us that Nicotine in tobacco is a highly addictive substance and we should stop using it. Nicotine is Nicotine whether it is in e-cigarettes or tobacco cigarettes, the only thing that varies is its strength.

Myth 2: There is only Nicotine in e-cigarettes not all the dodgy chemicals to be found in tobacco cigarettes.

It is true that part of the danger of tobacco cigarettes is that over the centuries around 4,000 additional chemicals have been added to capture different age groups, ethnic groups, males, females and even children. So far we do not have the evidence that this is a problem with e-cigarettes but within the last two years around 40 flavours have been added to do the same thing, attract different tastes. As e-cigarettes are mainly manufactured by the tobacco industry I do not believe that we can trust them not to expand their range in future to expand their market.

Myth 3: That Vaping is 1,000 times safer than smoking cigarettes.

This statement came from a question asked by Viscount Ridley in the House of Lords.

I am at a loss as to how anyone can declare after only about five years of public use of e-cigarettes that they are 1,000 times safer. What does that mean? Are they completely safe. Safe for whom, safe to use once a day or every ten minutes, safe for adults only or for children etc. I could see someone arguing that giving up smoking tobacco is 4,000 times safer than using e-fags, because there are around 4,000 additional chemicals in the range of tobacco products. So if you stop smoking your use of e-cigarettes would be 4,000 times safer? But the maths does not stack up as any particular brand may only have one or ten or a hundred of the added chemicals.

Myth 4: That using e-cigarettes is 95% safer than smoking tobacco.

This was one of the outcomes of the Public Health England’s research into the use of e-cigarettes. what his report said was;

“None of the studies reviewed alter the conclusion of Professor Britton’s 2014 review for Public Health England. While vaping may not be 100% safe, most of the chemicals causing smoking-related disease are absent and the
chemicals which are present pose limited danger. It has been previously estimated that electronic cigarettes are around 95% safer than smoking. This appears to remain a reasonable estimate.”

This ignores the fact that we do not know what is in the flavourings in e-cigarettes and there is nothing to stop the manufacturers from changing or adding to these substances. There is as far as I know no relevant legislation in place to prevent such tinkering with these substances.

**Myth 5: That Vaping is safe.**

Vaping is the word used to describe using e-cigarettes. Nobody can as yet state with any authority that the use of e-cigarettes is a safe thing to do. These products came onto the market about 5 years ago without any legislation in place to control their manufacture or the retailing of them. The only controls at the moment are on public advertising and around 50% of television and other adverts have been banned within days as they broke the rules.

**Myth 6: That Vaping is the most successful way to quit smoking.**

Again I am at a loss to find any substantial evidence to support this myth. E-cigarettes have not been in use for long enough for any, totally independent, in-depth research to have been completed. So none should believe this myth until the evidence is there. I know many people who have switched from tobacco to e-fags, but none who have so far moved to the next stage of abandoning their Nicotine addiction altogether by stopping using the e-cigarettes.

**Myth 7: That it is almost impossible to stop smoking but Vaping makes it possible.**

If it was very difficult, or nearly impossible to give up smoking, how is it that in the UK we now only have around 8 million smokers and 10 million e-smokers?

One important fact is that 90% of those who quit smoking successfully, did without any assistance. No Nicotine patches, hypnosis, smoking cessation classes or medication, they just did it. No surprise then that 10 million Nicotine addicts have quit. Ask your ex-smoking friends if you find this unbelievable.

Our government’s mainly offer Nicotine patches to quit, but across the world the success rate of Nicotine patches is only 2%. So why offer this failed method?

Vaping still traps it users in the addiction to Nicotine, so many of them will never break this addiction.

**Myth 8: That cost of Vaping is about a third of what it costs to smoke tobacco.**

The savings by smokers by Vaping is important, but in time the costs will rise as governments see this as a source of more tax, and the loss of tobacco revenues continues. The profit hungry tobacco companies will slowly increase
the price as addicted Vapers, discover that it very difficult to quit using Nicotine.

Ex-smokers will come to believer that Vaping is safe because medical experts and the government have told them so, but will be trapped in their addiction to Nicotine. Young people will inevitably start to use e-cigarettes as is already happening in France. That would be a very costly trend as past experience tells us that many young addicts become adult addicts to any drug in common use.

There has been no research done to establish if it is the actual e-cigarettes that encourage people to move from tobacco to them. It could just as likely be that people are highly motivated to move towards quitting smoking because of the enormous financial savings they can make. For this reason it would be a very bad idea to provide e-cigarettes on prescription as it takes away the motivation that people need to quit smoking.

The millions who are using e-cigarettes, could have saved 100% of their tobacco spending, by quitting Nicotine at to cost to them.

**Myth 9: That the government approves of Vaping so it must be safe.**

The government of the UK, the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh and Irish Assemblies have not yet advised the public that e-cigarettes are safe. All these political organisations are in the process of consulting the public about this and until they complete this nobody should believe the myth that our government’s approve of the use of e-cigarettes. There are particular concerns about what age group should be allowed to use these products but no laws yet in force to support that. There is also ongoing discussion about allowing the use of e-cigarettes in public places.

I would be delighted to hear of any myths about e-cigarettes not covered above.

**Max Cruickshank**