

Addressing E-cigarette health claims made on social media amidst the COVID-19 pandemic



Aki Ediriweera

University of British Columbia Canada

Biography

Nilanga Aki is currently a master's student at the University of British Columbia in Canada studying kinesiology. He is passionate about youth empowerment initiatives and evidence based research. He is the chair of the Global coalition for Adolescents' Unique Tobacco Addiction Related Issues (GCFAUTARI).

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has had devastating consequences with over 73.6 million confirmed cases and 1.64 million deaths worldwide. Amidst the pandemic, there have been unsubstantiated health claims pertaining to e-cigarettes (e-cigs) on social media. It is well known that adolescents heavily use social media for different needs including accessing information regarding their health. These health claims must be addressed to protect the wellbeing of adolescents. While social media provides the opportunity for adolescents to build support networks with others, it is also a place where e-cig companies have utilized attractive marketing practices to entice adolescents to use e-cigs. During the pandemic, health claims have been documented on social media that suggest e-cig use can be protective against COVID-19; these claims have been strategically developed and can mislead adolescents. Moreover, these claims can persuade adolescents to use e-cigs as a way to protect themselves from COVID-19.

E-cig use during adolescence has clear detrimental effects including nicotine dependence, nicotine negatively impacting the development of the brain, cardiovascular disease, cancer and pulmonary diseases.

The World Journal of Pediatrics (WJP) is a trusted voice for health. Moreover, the WJP has a social media presence that can be used to disseminate concise, engaging and evidence-based information to adolescents, so that they can make the best decisions for their health. Unfortunately, there has been no update from the WJP's social media accounts on COVID-19 and vaping. WJP's social media account can be used to disseminate other information that can improve adolescents' health and wellbeing during the pandemic such as by providing information on self-care practices for adolescents.

Key words: COVID-19, Adolescent Health, Vaping, Social Media and Health claims.