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Global State of Tobacco Harm Reduction (GSTHR) has revealed that most of the consumer advocacy organizations run by volunteers who successfully quit smoking using safer nicotine products.

The landmark global survey on the role and activities of consumer organisations advocating for access to safer nicotine products (SNP) and tobacco harm reduction was carried out by the by the Global State of Tobacco Harm Reduction, a project of UK public health agency, Knowledge Action Change (KAC). The first of its kind, the research was published in Wiley's open access journal, Public Health Challenges.

It reveals that there are 54 active consumer advocacy groups working around the world to raise awareness about, and promote the availability of, and access to, SNP, which include nicotine vaping products (e-cigarettes), Swedish-style snus, nicotine pouches and heated tobacco products.

Tobacco harm reduction is a potentially life-saving intervention for millions of people across the world. To those who currently use high-risk tobacco products, like cigarettes and some oral tobaccos, it offers the chance to switch to a range of SNP that pose fewer risks to their health.

GSTHR estimates show that these harm reduction options are now being used by an estimated 112 million people worldwide. The research, based on a detailed survey, found that most organisations (42) were operated entirely by volunteers, most of whom had successfully quit smoking with the help of SNP. The paper also notes that none of the consumer advocacy organisations reported receiving funding from tobacco or pharmaceutical companies.

The paper's lead author was Tomasz Jerzyński, Data Scientist for the Global State of Tobacco Harm Reduction project. He said: "This survey offered a unique opportunity to map these advocacy organisations for the first time and provide valuable

insight into how they are operating all over the world. The sustainability of these organisations is one of the main concerns that has come out of the data. All of these groups

face challenges due to their small numbers of core workers and their dependence on volunteers."

Speaking about the survey, another of its authors, Professor Gerry Stimson, Director of KAC and Emeritus Professor at Imperial College London, said: "It also highlights why consumer groups must be recognized as legitimate stakeholders in the policy sphere. These organizations have been set up, and are run by, people who have chosen to improve their own health by switching to SNP – people who have significant expertise to offer, and whose lives are directly affected by policymaking in this area.

"The views of safer nicotine product consumers must therefore be central to the development, crafting, and implementation of health policies going forwards – including at the next Framework Convention on Tobacco Control COP meeting this November, in Panama."

Taken from gsth.org

<https://gsth.org/media-centre/new-survey-reveals-scale-of-consumer-advocacy-for-safer-nicotine-products-and-need-for-recognised-role-in-global-policy-making/>



“Next time it could be you”—The McCarthyism in tobacco control

By Martin Cullip

At the end of November, an extraordinary episode caused outrage: the expulsion of Karl Erik Lund from a conference on e-cigarettes held in France. Dr. Lund is one of the world's most prominent researchers on tobacco harm reduction. Currently with the Norwegian Institute of Public Health, he has published important papers about snus and has testified on behalf of plaintiffs suing the tobacco industry. He has received a preventative medicine award from the Norwegian Medical Association, among many other roles and accolades. Yet on November 26, the French Cancer Research Institute (INCa) removed Lund from his position as co-chair of the conference's scientific committee, canceled his presentation and banned him from even attending, despite the fact he was one of the organizers.

His “crime”? He had answered a request for information from Knowledge Action Change (KAC), which produces the Global State of Tobacco Harm Reduction reports. That work is supported by a grant from the Foundation for a Smoke-Free World (FSFW); the Foundation receives its funding from Philip Morris International (PMI). Lund had sent the authors relevant information—and links—on snus and was, consequently, noted for his small contribution.

That's all it took. His removal from the conference appears to have been prompted after a posting on Tobacco Tactics (TT), a website run by the University of Bath that tracks the tobacco industry's influence around the world, drew attention to that credit. All in all, the International Association on Smoking Control & Harm Reduction for better health (SCOHRE)—of which Lund is vice president—was essentially characterized as an ally and front group for the tobacco industry. Conspicuously, the posting was timed to right before the conference started and, just to make sure, someone passed the information to the conference organizers at INCa, which led to the action being taken.

Anna Gilmore, a professor of public health at the University of Bath who heads up TT, conceded this point after many enraged nicotine policy experts objected. She said in a December email that there “is no suggestion that Prof. Lund has ever taken tobacco industry funding.” But by that time, the damage was done. (Gilmore did not respond to Filter's request for comment by publication time.)

Originated in 2011, Tobacco Tactics is a site designed to publicly link proponents of tobacco harm reduction (THR) with industry funding, encouraging their exclusion from public health conversations on bases other than the merits of their research or arguments. It was boosted in 2018 by an injection of \$20 million from Michael Bloomberg, a staunch ideological opponent of vapes and other products that are helping people switch to safer nicotine delivery around the world. Ironically, the deal was announced in the *Guardian* with an article paid for in part “by Vital Strategies with funding by Bloomberg Philanthropies.” In tobacco control circles, this does not add up to a conflict of interest, even though the double standard ought to be clear.

“There are two ways of looking at this,” Clive Bates, the former director of Action on Smoking and Health (UK), told Filter. “Most have stressed that Karl Erik has impeccable credentials, no connections to commercial entities and that a mistake has been made. But the deeper issue is why this should be grounds for exclusion in the first place. The

companies will play a major role in reducing the burden of disease arising from smoking. We shouldn't treat engagement with them like a contagion.”

Writing about the Lund affair, the journalist Marc Gunther described TT as failing “the most fundamental tests of fairness, accuracy and common sense.” Yet despite being a public institution, it seems unaccountable. THR advocates have filed a number of complaints to the University of Bath's ethics board over the years, but without response. Only after a storm of criticism did TT say it would discuss the points raised and “consider them further,” before removing the page. Lund's suspension was also, eventually, lifted: He was invited back to the conference at the last minute, but did not attend. Some who did present at the conference showed public solidarity with Lund by adding slides to express their disgust.

Sadly, this is not an isolated incident. For years, there has been a concerted campaign, led by Bloomberg and his vehicles, to ostracize THR proponents for real or tenuously exaggerated links with industry. In 2016, for instance, the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (CTFK) and the European Network for Smoking and Tobacco Prevention (ENSP) wrote to some participants planning to attend the Global Tobacco and Nicotine Forum (GTNF), warning them not to go because of the event's financial ties to the industry. And even the Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco (SRNT) has prevented the industry from presenting science at its conferences, regardless of the merits of their research. Unpleasant as that all is, it can be taken as a tacit acknowledgement by people who demand total abstinence from nicotine that their “quit or die” directive is a losing argument in the face of 8 million annual smoking-related deaths. One of many more recent examples is a charity organizer who planned to moderate a conference panel at the 2022 Global Forum on Nicotine—an event hosted by KAC Communications. The organizer, I was informed, was contacted in advance of their attendance with an ominous warning from a tobacco control NGO. Bravely, they decided to participate anyway, but many would not. This is the chilling effect that McCarthyist tobacco control entities intend to apply.

The irony is, by opposing harm reduction alternatives, they effectively promote the cigarettes sold by companies they hate.

“Mandating ignorance on the dynamics within the tobacco/nicotine field has led to a long series of own-goals by anti-tobacco groups,” David Sweanor, a tobacco industry expert and chair of the advisory board for the Centre for Health, Law, Policy, and Ethics at the University of Ottawa, told Filter. “I have witnessed this throughout my career. People protecting and hugely enriching the cigarette companies, and adding hugely to the toll of death and disease, not because they are being bought off but because they have never meaningfully intellectually engaged on the issue. It is evidently more fulfilling to fight imagined demons.”

Some meetings, including those organized by the University of Bath, have gone to extreme lengths. For example, the STOP: Expose Tobacco campaign (also funded by Bloomberg) at one point banned people from participating if they

have links with industry to the fourth degree of consanguinity. The fourth degree of consanguinity includes parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, great-great-grandparents, spouses, children, siblings, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, great-great-grandchildren, nieces or nephews, grand-nieces or grand-nephews, aunts or uncles, great-aunts or great-uncles and first cousins by blood or marriage. There's now a culture within tobacco control that is dedicated to perverting scientific debate. This has manifested itself

with situations such as Lund's, whereby reputable researchers making good arguments for risk-proportionate regulation of nicotine products are smeared as agents of evil. Lund has not been the first to suffer in this way and will not be the last. He has summed it up well in the past: "The fight for a better debate climate must continue, which means that the tactics from TT (and others) must be brought to an end. Next time it could be you."

<https://filtermag.org/mccarthyism-tobacco-control/>

The origin and evolution of tobacco harm reduction

Harm reduction refers to a set of strategies to minimise the risks associated with their behaviour. However, it does not completely eliminate the risks. Through harm-reduction techniques, one can limit the impact their choices have on themselves, others, society at large, and the environment. If you look at electric vehicles these days, like their petrol-powered predecessors, they transport people from point A to point B but emit significantly fewer emissions. This means that it's serving the same purpose as a regular car but with minimal risk i.e lesser emissions.

Harm reduction works in the same way with regard to tobacco and is referred to as Tobacco Harm Reduction (THR). Just like emissions from burning fossils have long been a problem faced by the planet, the use of combustible tobacco is also a cause of concern.

There have been several THR strategies in place to reduce the risk of harm associated with the consumption of combustible tobacco products. And while the best option is to quit tobacco use altogether, the journey to complete abstinence can be long, difficult and at times prove impossible.

Over the years, governments all over the world introduced several measures to deal with the health impact of combustible cigarettes. One of them is THR which refers to reducing the risk of harm associated with the behaviour of smoking combustible products. THR acknowledges that eliminating exposure to tobacco altogether would lead to the greatest reduction in harm. However, its users may not always be able to or willing to quit. This is why THR then focuses on minimising the risks associated with the consumption of combustible products.

It is a well-known fact that people smoke to obtain nicotine but the combustion of tobacco is one of the most harmful

ways to obtain it. When burned, tobacco releases nicotine along with many other chemicals. These chemicals contain several toxicants which cause harm to one's body and the environment. THR advocates for a healthy future for consumers by providing them with potentially less harmful alternatives. These potentially reduced-risk alternatives help consumers of combustible tobacco to switch entirely to products that deliver nicotine in a manner that can be 90% less harmful.

According to a brief published by WHO Europe, there is conclusive evidence which says that completely substituting electronic nicotine and non-nicotine delivery systems for combustible tobacco cigarettes reduces users' exposure to numerous toxicants and carcinogens present in combustible tobacco cigarettes.

But tobacco harm reduction strategies are often met with hostility due to a lack of information and understanding of the concept and strategies involved. It is important to understand that switching to potentially reduced-risk alternatives that come under the THR strategy has greater benefits for adult recalcitrant smokers, society at large and the environment. It's high time that we look at consumers of combustible tobacco products with compassion and greater understanding.

If you want to learn more about these potentially less risky alternatives, stay tuned for our next article which will focus on how Tobacco Harm Reduction has emerged as a global public health agenda and how different countries have successfully embraced it with extremely encouraging results.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2023/01/24/the-origin-and-evolution-of-tobacco-harm-reduction/?fbclid=IwAR2B8tCVeBCpe5CPMyTQBI EiqEWS86uVRdNRntz0x4lcPrYdwAFVYgaMlc>

Study: Contrary to most reports global teen vaping rates are actually low

A recent study by researchers from the University of Queensland in Australia, found that contrary to all the hysteria surrounding the alleged alarming teen vaping rates, global rates are quite low.

Titled, "Association between the implementation of tobacco control policies and adolescent vaping in 44 lower-middle, upper-middle, and high-income countries," a new study published in the scientific journal *Addiction*, found that while 8.6% of adolescents surveyed reported using e-cigarettes (vaping) in the past 30 days, only 1.7% did so regularly. Analysing data from 151,960 adolescents in 47 countries who participated in the World Health Organization's (WHO's) Global Youth Tobacco Survey between 2015 and 2018, the research team concluded that most teens are actually experimenting with the products rather than forming a habit and subsequent addiction.

https://www.vapingpost.com/2023/01/04/study-contrary-to-most-reports-global-teen-vaping-rates-are-actually-low/?fbclid=IwAR12ESmT4eDCZOERuR0rcN_PXU5jpswPx82pExHT5pSf4J_Cyh0yvTKq6l

Vaping benefits overshadowed by teen vaping concerns

Meanwhile, an article published in the *American Journal of Public Health* authored by Kenneth Warner, dean emeritus and the Avedis Donabedian Distinguished University Professor Emeritus at the University of Michigan's School of Public Health, and 14 other past presidents of the Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco, highlighted how the potential benefits of vaping are being overshadowed by all the panic surrounding the potential risks of teen vaping. The authors reviewed the health risks of e-cigarettes, their potential for smoking cessation and addressed the concerns about youth vaping. Taking all this into consideration they then highlighted the need to balance any valid concerns regarding teen vaping and the products' potential benefits for adult smoking cessation.

Regulating heated tobacco products may reduce smokers' health risks

Despite knowing the disadvantages of smoking and the harmful effects it has on a person's health, nine out of 10 smokers will continue smoking and up to two in three habitual smokers will die prematurely from a smoking-related illness.

Safer alternatives, such as, heated tobacco products (HTPs) are introduced to give addicted smokers a chance at improving their health. These products work on the heat-not-burn principle.

Compared to cigarettes, HTPs only heat the tobacco up to certain temperatures, effectively eliminating the emission of harmful smoke and toxins.

HTPs are mainly for adult smokers who would otherwise choose to continue to smoke. However, these tobacco products are not risk-free but according to studies, these smoke-free products carry far lower levels of harmful compounds than cigarettes.

It is also proven scientifically that if a smoker switches to HTPs from smoking, they are likely to have substantial improvements in their health.

According to an annual update released by the UK's Office for Health Improvements and Disparities, led by independent tobacco experts at King's College London, vaping poses a

small fraction of the risks of smoking in the short and medium term, and there is significant lower exposure to harmful substances from vaping compared with smoking, as shown by biomarkers associated with the risk of cancer, respiratory and cardiovascular conditions.

These researchers reviewed more than 400 published studies from around the world on smoking and vaping and concluded that smokers should be encouraged to use vaping products (or medically licensed products) to stop smoking, or as alternative nicotine delivery devices to reduce the health harms of smoking.

There is some hope for smokers in Pakistan as the Federal Cabinet of Pakistan, at the request of the Ministry of Health, is set to regulate HTPs.

If the step is carried out responsibly, it can help significantly reduce many risks to the health of smokers and even phase out cigarettes eventually.

Moreover, regulating these products will also help curb the illicit trade of cigarettes and non-combusted alternatives.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/2394171/regulating-heated-tobacco-products-may-reduce-smokers-health-risks?fbclid=IwAR3oZ9fcc-ldzGJ7oznYua5s45-RN6Z8hp1sEN9SL03_IVS7THuce7Uwbik

NIH-funded study: Smokers who switch to vaping have healthier lifestyles

Conducted by researchers at the University of Washington, the study indicated that smokers who switch to e-cigarettes seem to engage in healthier behaviours.

Titled, "Is e-cigarette use associated with better health and functioning among smokers approaching midlife?" the study surveyed a group of participants who smoked at 30 and another group who smoked or vaped at 39, measuring about nine factors of healthy ageing and well-being and looked into how often they engaged in certain activities.

Of the 156 participants, 64% reported only smoking at age 39, 28% were dual users, and 8% used only vapes. The participants who reported switching to vaping some or all the time by age 39 reported better physical health, they also exercised more and had a more active social life.



The research team emphasized that by no means are they implying that

vaping is healthy, and highlighted its downsides. However, they added, for smokers unable to quit the devices may be associated with a healthier lifestyle.

"Although the study cannot show a causal relationship, we think that because e-cigarettes have less stigma, less odor and are less physically harmful, they may increase health-promoting opportunities among smokers," said study author Rick Kosterman. "What we're saying is that e-cigs do have a positive role to play for existing adult smokers who continue to use nicotine."

According to the findings recently reported in *Circulation*, suggested that smokers who switch exclusively to vaping reduce their risk of heart disease by 34%. The researchers assessed vaping and smoking patterns, and then compared them to incidences of self-reported heart disease, such as stroke, a heart attack and heart failure.

The compiled data indicated that compared to nonsmokers, smokers experienced a risk of heart disease that was 1.8 times higher, while the risk for exclusive vapers was not statistically different. To this effect, the study concluded that there is a significant link between smoking and heart disease, but not between vaping and heart disease.

<https://www.vapingpost.com/2023/01/24/nih-funded-study-smokers-who-switch-to-vaping-have-healthier-lifestyles/?fbclid=IwAR1aXsDdgFTa9T3sYJns4AaoZBBblb0mQB5utTHvJbtZpT5-VMDS1Hlmspm>

Established in 2018, ARI is an initiative aimed at filling gaps in research and advocacy on ending combustible smoking in a generation. Supported by the Foundation for A Smoke-Free World (FSFW), ARI established the Pakistan Alliance for Nicotine and Tobacco Harm Reduction (PANTHR) in 2019 to promote innovative solutions for smoking cessation.

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