

Use of Electric Cigarettes (E-cig) in Chronic Pain Patients

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Introduction

Electronic cigarettes (E-Cig) were introduced in the US in 2007. Since, the use of E-Cig has increased. As in other tobacco products, E-cig poses health risks. Studies have shown correlation of pain and tobacco use, with the association being bidirectional: tobacco use, such as smoking is associated with higher pain levels, and chronic pain is associated with higher levels of tobacco use (1,2). However, there is limited data on E-cig use in chronic pain, as well as the association with opioid use.

This project surveyed chronic pain patients to assess the use and to evaluate any correlation.

Materials and Methods

After institutional IRB approval, a survey was conducted in established chronic pain patients. The survey and results were anonymous, without collection of any identifiable information. The survey collected age, sex, used of E-Cig and opioid use.

Results

A total of 312 patients were surveyed. 198 Females (63.5%), 114 Males (36.5%). Average age was 57.8, ~59 years for males, ~58 years for females. 66 patients (21.1%) were managed on chronic opioids, 36 female, 30 male. 9 females (4.5%) had tried E-Cig in the past, but none (0%) were active users. 18 males (15.8%) had tried E-Cig in the past but only 9 (7.8%) were active users. In the opioid managed patients, 6 (9.1%) had and were active users of E-Cig. Additionally, all 6 were males (20%).

Discussion

A recent survey showed ~5% E-Cig use in the U.S. (3) In this small, single site survey of chronic pain patients, ~8.6% had tried E-Cig with ~2% actively using E-Cig. However, in the opioid managed population, 9.1% had tried and were active users, with all 6 being males, younger than 50 years of age, accounting for 20% of opioid managed male population. As the use of E-cig becomes more mainstream, the association of E-cig use in chronic pain, including opioid use may be bidirectional in correlation, as in past with other tobacco products and will need to be monitored.

References

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