

E – CIGARETTES, GOOD OR BAD?

Once the Anti-Smoking campaign took off it was only a short time before advertisements began to appear offering safe alternatives.

Among the first was the nicotine laced chewing gum providing a dose of the drug without the accompanying “big C” dangers.

Not long afterwards the electronic or e-cigarette was heralded as the ultimate safe substitute- a virtual cigarette, able to provide the drug without the accompanying carcinogenic dangers.. Designed to look and be used as the real thing the e-cigarette incorporates a battery powered heating element which caused the evaporation of a volatile nicotine laced liquid providing the same stimulus as a regular cigarette. The future of a carcinogenic free smoking alternative appeared to be assured.

Unfortunately the practicalities appear not to match the theory., In the e-cigarettes an approximate 9:1 mixture of propylene glycol (the anti-freeze agent) and nicotine solution are put in a cartridge which is warmed by the battery generated heated coil enabling the nicotine solution to be vaporised and inhaled producing the sensation associated with smoking minus the carcinogens. However it is claimed by some that the inhalant vapour may cause severe respiratory irritation.

In America, the Food and Drug Administration, (F.D.A.) found, on analysis, traces of nitrosamine, a potential carcinogen. The e-cigarette manufacturers were quick to point out that the concentrations in natural cigarettes were far greater than ever appeared in their own ‘artificial’ cigarettes. In addition, on analysis, other potential carcinogens including ethanol and glycerine were found to present causing the banning of the e-cigarettes in some USA states.

Currently the importation of e-cigarettes into the U.K. is unrestricted because they are not classified as medical devices, neither do they contain tobacco and thus fall outside the Tobacco Products Regulations. This apparent anomaly has led to the Royal College of Physicians to call for Regulation to ensure guaranteed standards including appropriate levels of nicotine are present.

Apart from the U.S.A. e-cigarettes have been banned in Australia and in Canada whilst in Hanover, Germany, bans have been introduced forbidding their use in the city’s offices and vehicles. Presumably in these places workers are still permitted to light up their favourite fags on the pavements outside offices where the chances of their “catching their death’s” is rated lower than developing pulmonary cancer.

Editors footnote

On a personal note, I was a 40 a day smoker for more than 42 years. Last year I used E-Cigarettes for a period to enable me to cut down from 40 real cigarettes a day to 5, before finally kicking the habit altogether, and now, being nicotine free for more than 8 years, I must say that they helped me enormously.