Noticing e-cigarette advertisements and associations with use of e-cigarettes, disapproval of smoking, and quitting smoking: findings from the International Tobacco Control (ITC) Netherlands Survey


Abstract
Background: Much attention has been directed towards the possible effects of e-cigarette advertisements on adolescent never smokers. However, e-cigarette advertising may also influence perceptions and behaviors of adult smokers. The aim of our study was to examine whether noticing e-cigarette advertisements is associated with current use of e-cigarettes, disapproval of smoking, quit smoking attempts, and quit smoking success.

Methods: We used longitudinal data from two survey waves of the ITC Netherlands Survey among smokers aged 16 years and older (n = 1198). Respondents were asked whether they noticed e-cigarettes being advertised on television, on the radio, and in newspapers or magazines in the previous 6 months.

Results: There was a significant increase in noticing e-cigarette advertisements between 2013 (13.3%) and 2014 (36.0%), across all media. The largest increase was for television advertisements. There was also a substantial increase in current use of e-cigarettes (from 3.1% to 13.3%), but this was not related to noticing advertisements in traditional media (OR = 0.99, p = 0.937). Noticing advertisements was bivariately associated with more disapproval of smoking (Beta = 0.05, p = 0.019) and with a higher likelihood of attempting to quit smoking (OR = 1.37, p = 0.038), but these associations did not reach significance in multivariate analyses. There was no significant association between noticing advertisements and quit smoking success in either the bivariate or multivariate regression analysis (OR = 0.92, p = 0.807).

Conclusion: Noticing e-cigarette advertisements increased sharply in the Netherlands between 2013 and 2014 along with increased e-cigarette use, but the two appear unrelated. The advertisements did not seem to have adverse effects on disapproval of smoking and smoking cessation.

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