

NEWS RELEASE

MISCONCEPTION ON VAPE CAN LEAD TO INEFFECTIVE POLICY AND REGULATIONS

KUALA LUMPUR, 30 June 2022 – Advanced Centre for Addiction Treatment Advocacy (ACATA) voiced its concern over the danger of sharing inaccurate information on harm reduced products such as vape, especially amongst stakeholders who are developing regulations for vape in Malaysia.

The association, which is advocating on issues related to addiction therapy, made the statement today, following comment by Professor Dr. Sharifa Ezat Wan Puteh, a Public Health expert from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), who shared her views on the misconceptions surrounding e-cigarette or vaping associated lung injury (EVALI)

Dr Arifin Fii, President of Advanced Centre for Addiction Treatment Advocacy said, “EVALI emerged after a string of reports on lung injuries among youths using vape in the United States in 2019. The initial blame was on vaping, leading to backlash against vaping and even a complete ban in Massachusetts which lasted months, resulting in some vape shops closing for good.”

“However, the [Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) later identified that the real cause of the EVALI was the presence of vitamin E acetate which was added into illegal Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) adulterated e-juices. Vaping was not the problem, but misuse and abuse of the products are the real cause. Unfortunately, the damage was done, and vape reputation remains bad until today, discouraging smokers from switching to this less harmful alternative.”

Dr Arifin added that such misconceptions are not only common among the public, but also among medical professionals and government stakeholders.

“The inaccurate reports on EVALI are prevalent, leaving policymakers doubtful over the safety and effectiveness of using harm reduction strategies in Malaysia particularly on the effectiveness and safety of vape.”

“These are of course valid concerns. Vape is not completely harmless and as vape is relatively new, the long-term effect is not yet fully known. However, scientific evidence so far strongly suggest that vape is likely to be far less harmful to health compared to cigarette smoking. We know for certain that smoking is very harmful for health and linked to many diseases. Vape can be a less harmful alternative and an effective way to help people successfully quit smoking. In fact, various credible international studies support harm reduction strategies.”

He added that to ensure the safety of vape users, in view of its use as an alternative to smoking and a quit smoking tool, comprehensive regulations are needed.

“For harm reduction strategy to work, realistic and risk-proportionate regulatory framework that is different from tobacco products must be introduced. Evidence on risks and benefit must be studied and this data can be used to develop regulations that are appropriate for products such as vape. Educating people at risk namely smokers about vaping is important, as they are those who will benefit the most from vaping. Most important is that they are receiving the correct, accurate and evidence-based information,” he concluded.

About Advanced Centre for Addiction Treatment Advocacy

Advanced Centre for Addiction Treatment Advocacy or ACATA is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) working to reduce addiction-related harms for Malaysians. It is promoting evidence-based public health policies with human rights-based approaches, through research and analysis. Helmed by medical professionals, ACATA strives to increase local studies on addiction and the implementation of progressive science-based regulatory frameworks through advocacy, public awareness, education, and research dissemination.

For more information, visit <http://acata.com.my/index.html>