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## LEADING HEALTH GROUPS AND RESEARCHERS PUBLISH GUIDANCE ON E-CIGARETTES IN THE WORKPLACE

*Collaboration produces recommendations for the use of e-cigarettes in employer-sponsored workplace wellness programs and tobacco-cessation policies*

**EDINA, Minn. (March 11, 2015)**—The use of e-cigarettes by children and adults has exploded in the United States over the last several years. The rapid, unregulated growth of e-cigarettes has caused concern among health care organizations and is the reason [HERO](#) (the Health Enhancement Research Organization) led the development of collaborative guidance on the use of e-cigarettes in tobacco policy for employers.

The recommendations can be found in the paper, [“Guidance to Employers on Integrating E-cigarettes/Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems into Tobacco Worksite Policy,”](#) which was published this week in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*. The paper represents the work of a large group of health professionals from the private and public sector, including non-profit organizations, colleges and universities, research organizations, and wellness program providers who came together to review the most current research on the use and effects of e-cigarettes and how they are regulated, and to develop recommendations for how to incorporate these products into tobacco policy for the worksite.

“Employers have invested significant time and resources into developing effective workplace policies that help reduce the use of tobacco among employees and their families,” said Jerry Noyce, president and CEO of HERO. “This guidance helps employers adjust their policies and programs to accommodate the rapid growth of e-cigarettes so they do not lose momentum in their health improvement efforts.”

According to the authors of the guidance, health experts are concerned about the rapid growth of e-cigarettes in both adults and youth because the long-term health effects from the chemicals in e-cigarettes are not yet known and because these products are not yet regulated by the United States Food & Drug Administration (FDA).

“We are advocating that the FDA regulate these products as quickly as possible to ensure quality control in manufacturing and to oversee safety and packaging and how these products are marketed and advertised,” said Laurie Whitsel, Ph.D., director of policy research for the American Heart Association, and lead author of the paper. “In the meantime, we thought it was important to issue some guidance to employers based on the current evidence.”

Ron Loeppke, M.D., immediate past president of the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine and a co-author of the paper added that the guidance is well timed and supports the increasing focus on workforce health and productivity by employers.

“Employers have made significant strides in recent years to develop new strategies that maximize the overall health and productivity of the workforce,” said Loeppke. “This guidance gives them a new tool to support this effort by helping them tackle tobacco use, which is connected to many health issues.”

The guidance paper recommends that employers take action to integrate e-cigarettes into their workplace tobacco policies and wellness programs and offers the following suggestions for employers and those who develop and administer these programs and policies:

1. E-cigarettes should be considered a tobacco product in tobacco worksite policy and employers should include e-cigarettes in their tobacco-free policies.
2. Employers should strive for tobacco-free work environments and ban e-cigarette use in their smoke-free work areas. If they do have designated smoking areas, they should establish a separate area for e-cigarette users. This will keep e-cigarette users safe from the second-hand smoke in cigarettes and it will help employees who are using e-cigarettes instead of cigarettes not relapse into smoking.
3. When screening for tobacco use as part of a workplace wellness program, employers should optimally screen for both tobacco and e-cigarette use to tailor their wellness programs and worksite policies.
4. Employers should continue to offer comprehensive tobacco cessation services for employees who wish to stop tobacco use, and e-cigarette users should be eligible for these services. Many e-cigarette users use other forms of tobacco and can be helped by cessation support.
5. If employers administer health contingent incentives, they should target tobacco use instead of nicotine use. An incentive policy consistent with the Affordable Care Act cannot require success at cessation but may offer employees who use tobacco “reasonable alternatives” that most commonly include completion of a cessation program.
6. Employers should include education and awareness of e-cigarettes and cessation therapies in workplace wellness programs and publicize the workplace tobacco policy for employees, spouses and dependents. It is especially important to reach the children and adolescents of employees’ families where education about e-cigarettes may prevent initiation of a nicotine habit.

“While there is still much to learn about the acute and chronic health effects of e-cigarette use, our policy recommendations are based on robust evidence that suggests unregulated use of e-cigarettes in the workplace could reverse social norms leading to an increase in tobacco use and addiction,” said Aruni Bhatnagar, Ph.D., FAHA, professor of medicine at the University of Louisville. “This guidance can help employers across the country take a step in the right direction when it comes to tobacco control efforts.”

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**About HERO** – Based in Edina, Minn., the Health Enhancement Research Organization (HERO) is a non-profit corporation dedicated to the creation and dissemination of employee health management research, education, policy, strategy, and leadership. HERO was established in 1996 as a not-for-profit, 501(c)3 corporation to create high quality employee health management (EHM) research, especially that dealing with the impact of modifiable health risks on health care costs. To learn more, visit [www.the-hero.org](http://www.the-hero.org). Follow on Twitter: @HEROehm.