



22 september 2014

Dear Dr Chan,

No-one ever died, or even developed a disease, from vaping. Yet millions are dying by inhaling smoke from tobacco, cars and industrial pollution. Vaping may not be a miracle cure for all, but certainly it will reduce the deadly toll. The only question is by how much. Even if just one life were to be saved, surely it would be worth any visual disturbance the sight of vapour might provoke amongst some onlookers. You can't seriously believe that such distress is worth more than human life itself, even the life of a much scorned smoker.

We note that everywhere vaping becomes popular, sales of tobacco products drop significantly. So how can you claim that it "renormalizes smoking" (to use an expression that actually means "causes visual discomfort")? Were you right, we would witness an increase in sales of tobacco products which indeed would threaten public health; but as the contrary is true the only problem caused by vaping is merely to those people upset by what they see.

You must be aware that the vaping revolution was initiated and entirely funded by vapers themselves. No taxpayer's money was involved. Yet you want society to spend vast sums on restricting or banning vaping to deny smokers the exit they have chosen; and on funding misinformation campaigns that claim vaping is as dangerous as smoking- just because some people don't like the look of it?

May we suggest that public health would benefit from a less costly and more judicious use of public funds? Why not propose that properly adapted regulation be supported by objective scientific research, taking into account the many studies that have already been undertaken? Instead of reacting hysterically to something that has not been developed by the pharmaceutical industry and not followed the normal approval mechanism, why not take the time necessary for proper consultation with all stakeholders including vapers themselves, to find the best way to promote the lifesaving potential of this new technology? Why on earth are you trying instead to crush it under the weight of unjustified and liberticidal diktat?

The WHO appears determined to consider smokers as patients, to be treated only by formally approved medicinal products. If the patients refuse such treatment (or if, as is far more likely to be the case, it turns out to be useless) and, as rebellious children, seek another solution, then, however effective it may be, that solution must be quashed whatever the financial and human cost.

For we, as representatives of Europe's millions of vapers and as vapers ourselves, have experienced traditional pharmaceutical quitting aids and know of their ineffectiveness. You yourself will be aware that statistically, despite their makers' propaganda, they have an appalling fail rate. You will have noted that although they are heavily promoted and are often paid for by public health services, smoking prevalence is stagnating in most countries and is even increasing amongst the young. You may even have noticed that there are three major exceptions: the US, UK and France where tobacco use is declining. It is surely not a coincidence that these are the places where the sale of electronic cigarettes is relatively unrestricted and as a result has soared.

Of course the WHO may be complimented on having promoted measures that protect bystanders from passive smoking. With the electronic cigarette having the potential to supplant traditional tobacco smoking, you should therefore be welcoming the extensive scientific research that shows that passive vaping is not measurably noxious. So why are you indicating the opposite? Why do you consider vapers to be as dangerous as smokers; both to be treated as pariahs?



Why have you allowed one of your officials to proclaim that “The most dangerous thing about this product (e-cigarette) is that the nicotine goes directly to the lungs while regular cigarettes have a filter”? And another to assert that “smart marketing and inadequate information on the nicotine content in e-cigarettes has created a false impression that these devices are not as harmful as regular cigarettes”? Or yet another to offer, to the EU Parliament’s ENVI committee, a presentation that according to specialists consisted in cherry-picking negative studies showing that e-cigarettes are bad whilst deliberately omitting those that suggest that e-cigarettes could be useful in helping people quit smoking?

Are you surprised that we are angry about your organisation ignoring the people most directly concerned: the vapers; about apparently being treated as the poodles of a tobacco industry the intentions of which we are in fact highly suspicious; about the impression that your organisation gives of being in unhealthy close proximity to the interests of the pharmaceutical industry?

After seven years of scientific research, what value should we give the recent WHO report that claims "We do not know enough"? Does it not rather sound as if the WHO does not want to know? The only substantive argument to support the draconian measures it proposes is that there is a certain visual resemblance to tobacco smoking. By totally ignoring the research done by almost every leading scientist in the field of vaping that points to the significant public health benefit of e-cigarettes which if encouraged could become massive, the WHO seems to be invoking ignorance in support of its otherwise unsubstantiated measures. The participants to the forthcoming COP6 could surely do with advice based on real, undistorted evidence.

In the meantime, smokers, without any support from public health officials, any subsidy from the public pocket, are adopting electronic cigarettes and their more advanced variants substantially to reduce, or to cease altogether smoked tobacco consumption. In certain countries, where its use has not been unjustifiably banned, they are doing so thanks to snus, another effective harm-reduction product. All we ask is that we continue to be allowed to do so whilst, through our own efforts and with the support of our standards institutes, ensuring product quality and safety.

The only question before COP6 should be the extent of the support the WHO could give us; and not how best to encourage us to return to tobacco and keep smokers in the clutches of powerful industrial interests.

Why not show that you are open not only to commercial and political interests, but to ordinary people as well? Why not invite us to address COP6?

Let Moscow witness a real people’s revolution!

Yours sincerely,

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for and on behalf of the Independent Vapers’ Associations and Organisations of Belgium, Netherlands, France, Spain, Denmark, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Norway, Finland, Poland, Czech republic and Hungary.

