

ENDS uptake among Māori and Pacific smokers: A qualitative analysis

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Introduction:

- Although many smokers wish to quit smoking by using an electronic nicotine delivery system (ENDs), several find the transition difficult and revert to smoking.
- In New Zealand, Māori and Pacific peoples are disproportionately burdened by the social, economic and health harms caused by smoking.
- Facilitating movement from smoking to exclusive ENDS use could reduce long-standing health inequities that disadvantage Māori and Pacific, and help realise the Smokefree 2025 goal.

Research question: What challenges do Māori and Pacific smokers experience in moving from smoking to exclusive ENDS use, and how might these challenges be addressed?

Results:

Challenges

We identified five challenges that complicated participants' movement from smoking to exclusive ENDS use, and two factors that facilitated transition.

Difficulty Accessing Information

Participants learned about vaping from friends but also wanted to know how effective vaping was as a cessation tool, and what its long term effects were.

"there were two sets of information that I wanted... what I was missing was just the long-term effects... and how successful e-cigarettes were for getting smokers off cigarettes... and then slowly decreasing their nicotine levels over time... I did look for that information. I didn't really find anything useful, reliable, so I kind of left it to be" (Tilly)

Varied Experiences of Advisors

Participants often relied on retailers to guide their decisions, but with varying outcomes.

"there's the coil life, and the battery life... that type of information is not given and it's never explained either... you don't know how much [nicotine] you actually need to be satisfied... people that sell it should actually explain how to use it and how not to" (Steve)

"You just talk to the guys... tell them what you want and they've got their own vapes there and then they just let you know... they give you a try of it... that's how I managed to end up with this one because that's exactly what I wanted... they kind of worked out what I wanted and pointed me in the right direction" (Pete)

Challenging the Norm

Once participants began vaping, they had to manage settings where smoking was normative.

"I did try to give up smoking then my dad was still smoking and every time he went outside and had a smoke, I would just smell that smell and... I went outside one time and I just asked him for a smoke and then... that was it." (Jaime)

Challenges Adapting to a New Behaviour and Rediscovering Satisfaction

ENDS adoption involved many decisions and persistence to develop a satisfying technique.

"...with a cigarette, no matter how much you take in, or inhale, or exhale, or however... it wouldn't make me choke. But, with...the vape smoke... you have to perfect a way of inhaling it in order for you not to choke". (Amy)

Planning and Maintaining ENDS

Tobacco's easy accessibility contrasted with the planning ENDS required.

"I was getting sick of having to put it on charge and then having to wait six hours to charge and not having anything to use." (David)

"I didn't realise that it was going to take so much effort...threading the cotton...and changing the wires." (Marie)

Freedom and Liberation

Participants felt freed from an economic burden and liberated from health concerns.

"it's a good feeling too because you know how much money you spent on it." (Jayden)

"there is a complete massive difference. Smoking is bad for your health, clogs your lungs, doesn't help with your breathing, you smell stink all the time." (Steve)

A Collective Movement to ENDS

Some participants felt reinforced by others' adoption of ENDS

"the amount of people that have quit using them...is the most reassuring thing that I have come across... having myself being able to quit using them, seeing my brother quit using one of them, and actually seeing it a bit more recently, since I started." (David)

Methods:

- Using social media, community advertising and affinity networks, we recruited 16 Māori and Pacific participants who wished to quit smoking using an ENDS device.
- Participants had diverse smoking histories; eight were dual users and eight were exclusive ENDS users.
- We probed participants' movement from smoking to vaping, challenges faced, and factors that assisted (or could assist) their transition.
- We managed the data using NVivo v11 and used a thematic analysis approach to interpret the transcripts.

Facilitators

Those who persisted found ENDS less expensive than smoking, felt healthier, and saw themselves as role models for others.

Conclusions:

Participants found the transition to ENDS challenging.

- Future work could explore
- Establishing updated, expert information sites,
- Retailer licensing to ensure minimum knowledge standards and facilitate uptake and transition,
- Structuring community support so ENDS use rather than smoking becomes normative.

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