“Smokeless tobacco products are not safer alternatives to cigarette smoking.”

Smokeless Tobacco Is Just as Harmful as Cigarettes

Lorinda Bullock

Lorinda Bullock is associate editor of the Elsevier Global Medical News. In the following viewpoint, she describes findings by the American Heart Association verifying that, contrary to articles from other sources, smokeless tobacco products are not superior alternatives to cigarettes, do not help smokers quit, and when used long-term increase the risk of heart attacks, strokes, and cancer. Bullock notes that while chewing tobacco use has been on the decline in the United States since the 1980s, snuff is gaining popularity, especially in youth brackets.

As you read, consider the following questions:

1. According to the article, what types of nicotine replacement therapy, if any, does the American Heart Association endorse and what makes these types different from smokeless tobacco?
2. What do the researchers quoted in the article claim makes smokeless tobacco hazardous?

Should Smoking Alternatives Be Regulated?

3. What social or psychological factors might account for the statistic cited in the article that smokeless tobacco use is more prevalent among young men than any other demographic?

Smokeless tobacco products are not safer alternatives to cigarette smoking, they do not help smokers quit, and their long-term use can, in fact, increase the risk of fatal heart attack, fatal stroke, and cancer, the American Heart Association [AHA] warned in a scientific statement.

The researchers, led by Mariann R. Piano, Ph.D., examined several international studies to compare smokeless tobacco use and its health risks.

Meta-analysis data involving male, Swedish smokers [from] 1976–2002 showed a significant decrease in cigarette smoking that corresponded with an increase in use of smokeless tobacco products, the investigators wrote in the AHA journal, Circulation. Despite the decline in cigarette use, concern is warranted, Dr. Piano, professor of biobehavioral science at the University of Illinois at Chicago, explained: “Smokeless tobacco products are harmful and addictive—that does not translate to a better alternative,” Dr. Piano said in a written statement released by the association.

“Scientists and policy makers need to assess the effect of ‘reduced risk’ messages related to smokeless tobacco use on public perception, especially among smokers who might be trying to quit,” Dr. Piano and her colleagues wrote.

Citing “inadequate evidence of smoking cessation efficacy and safety,” the researchers deemed as inappropriate the promotion of smokeless tobacco as a way to reduce smoking-related diseases.

The American Heart Association does recommend nicotine replacement therapy (nicotine gum or a nicotine-releasing patch placed on the skin) as a safer option for cigarette smokers wanting to quit. “Clinical studies have found no increased risk