

A CROSS-SECTIONAL SURVEY OF HEALTHCARE PROVIDER AWARENESS AND PERCEPTIONS OF TOBACCO AND NICOTINE-CONTAINING PRODUCTS

Susan Martelle¹, Deena Battista², Michael Polster³

¹RAI Services Company, Winston-Salem, NC, USA, ²Womble Bond Dickinson, Winston-Salem, NC, USA, ³Naxon, Philadelphia, PA, US

Introduction

The “continuum of risk” for different types of tobacco and nicotine-containing products (TNPs), based primarily on whether the product is burned, has been recognized by FDA and is central to tobacco harm reduction. Pervasive misperceptions of the relative risks of different types of TNPs persist,^{1,2} likely due to limited messaging from trustworthy sources. As a trusted source of medical information for many adults, healthcare providers (HCPs) could educate patients about the relative risks of different types of tobacco products. However, research suggests that HCPs have misperceptions about the risk of nicotine³ and relative risk of TNPs⁴ as well.

The current survey was designed to address the following:

- HCP perceptions of risk associated with different types of TNPs
- HCP awareness of the source of the risk from smoking cigarettes
- Whether HCPs associate switching from cigarettes to non-combustible TNPs with reduced risk

Whereas previous surveys have focused on physicians, the current survey also includes nurse practitioners (NPs) and physician assistants (PAs) due to their patient-facing roles that often involve screening for tobacco use and conversations with smokers about the benefits of quitting tobacco.

Methodology

- An online survey was conducted with 700 HCPs from a national HCP panel (Survey Healthcare Global).
- Respondents were quota-sampled to include 100 NPs/PAs in primary care, 100 NPs/PAs in specialty care, and 100 MDs/DOs in five specialties who provide primary care and/or see patients with smoking-related disease: family/general practice (FP/GP), internal medicine (IM), obstetrics/gynecology (OB/GYN), cardiology (CARD), and pulmonology (PULM).
- To create a “total” for the sample that accurately represents proportions of HCPs in these specialties, respondents were weighted to American Medical Association (AMA) counts by specialty; separate “totals” were also created for “NPs/PAs” and “MDs”
- Measures included ratings of overall health risks of several TNPs on a 100-point scale; estimates of how much of the risk of lung cancer is associated with four aspects of smoking cigarettes, and beliefs about whether reducing cigarettes per day (CPD) or quitting smoking using different types of TNPs reduces health risks.

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Contacts

Susan Martelle, martels@rjrt.com

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Results

Figure 1 presents mean ratings of overall health risk for five TNPs.

- HCPs associate cigarettes with more overall health risk (95.9) than e-cigarettes (79.5) or smokeless tobacco (76.4), both of which are associated with more risk than nicotine pouches (60.3) or NRT (40.3).
- A comparison of mean ratings indicates that HCPs believe e-cigarettes have about 83% of the risk of cigarettes ((95.9 – 79.5)/95.9 = 83%) and nicotine pouches have about 63% of the risk of cigarettes ((95.9 – 60.3)/95.9 = 63%).

Figure 1: Mean Ratings of Perceived Overall Health Risk (100-point scale)

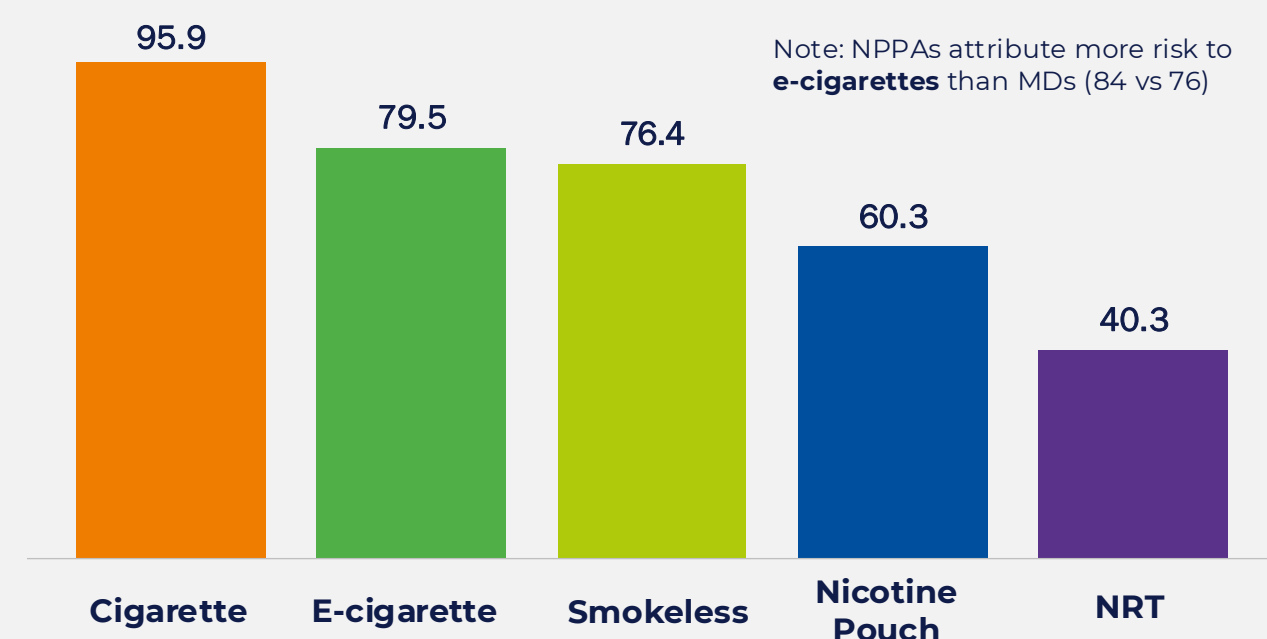
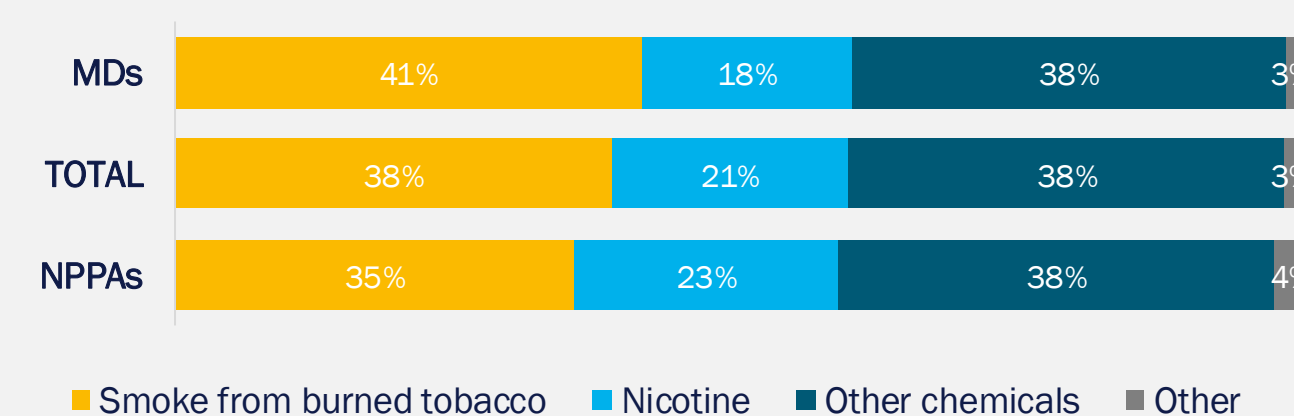


Figure 2 presents how much of the risk of lung cancer HCPs attribute to each of four sources.

- HCPs attribute only about 40% of the risk of lung cancer from smoking to “smoke from burned tobacco”, with MDs attributing slightly more risk to smoke from burned tobacco than NP/PAs.

Figure 2: Attribution of Sources of Lung Cancer Risk from Smoking



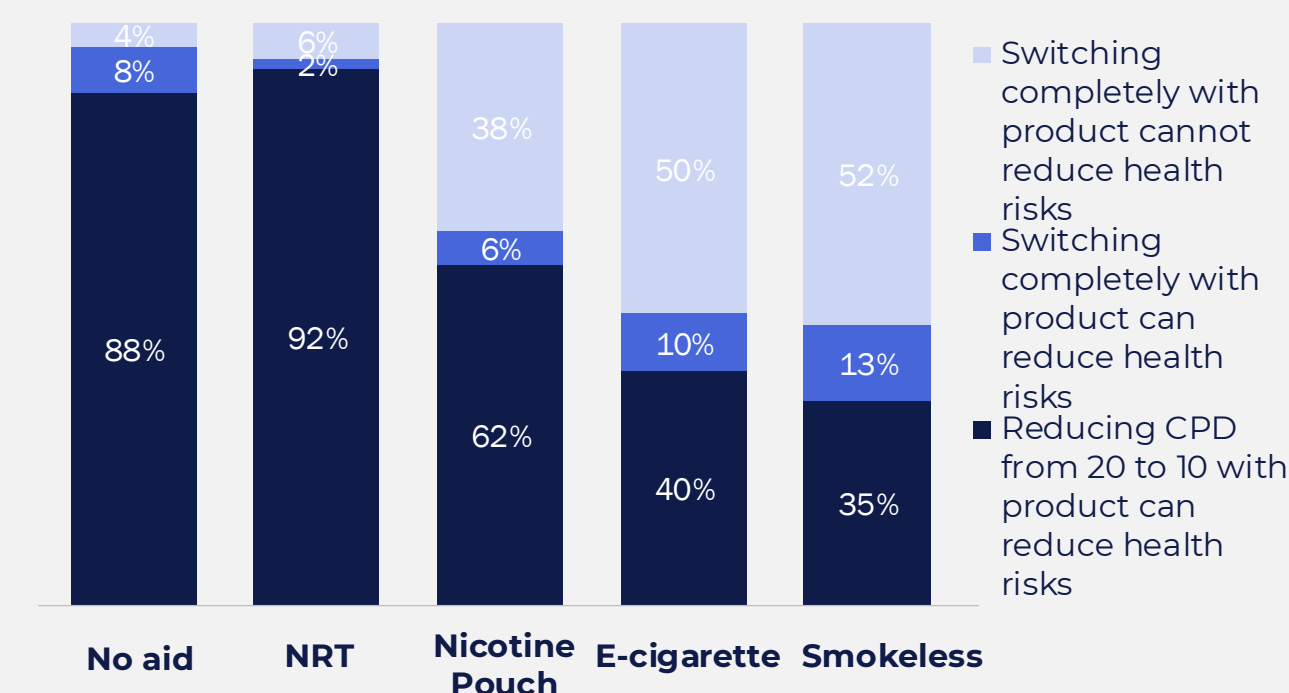
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Figure 3 presents the proportion of HCPs who believe that reducing CPD or switching completely from smoking to different TNPs reduces health risks.

- About half of HCPs believe that either reducing CPD with e-cigarettes or smokeless tobacco or switching completely from cigarettes to e-cigarettes or smokeless tobacco can reduce health risks.
- 68% believe that either reducing CPD with nicotine pouches or switching completely from cigarettes to nicotine pouches can reduce health risks.

Figure 3: Proportion of HCPs Who Believe Partial and Complete Switching from Cigarettes to Other Tobacco Products Can Reduce Health Risks



Conclusion

- HCPs do perceive a continuum of risk for TNPs, but don’t fully appreciate the magnitude of risk-reduction associated with switching from cigarettes to a non-combustible product, perhaps because their attributions of lung cancer risk to combustion are less than half of the actual contribution of combustion to the risk of lung cancer.⁵
- Only half of HCPs believe that switching completely to a non-combustible tobacco product can reduce health risks.
- Ensuring more HCPs have up-to-date, evidence-based information about the relative risks of TNPs is necessary so that they can provide patients with accurate information regarding the continuum of risk of TNPs.
- FDA recognizes that HCPs play a critical role in the delivery of messaging about the continuum of risk for TNPs, and the current survey supports the need for additional funding on relative risk education and messaging.

