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E-Cigarette Usage Patterns: a Survey of Smokers and E- Cigarette Users

Margherita Ferrante*, Environmental and Food Hygiene Laboratory (LIAA) - G.F. Ingrassia Department - Hygiene and Public Health, Catania University, Italy.F, Italy, marfer@unict.it; Giovanni Battista Modonutti, Research Group on Education for Health (GRES), Department of Humanities - University of Trieste., Italy, modonuttigb@gmail.com; Gea Oliveri Conti, Environmental and Food Hygiene Laboratory (LIAA) - G.F. Ingrassia Department - Hygiene and Public Health, Catania University, Italy.F, Italy, olivericonti@unict.it; Rossella Fazio, Environmental and Food Hygiene Laboratory (LIAA) - G.F. Ingrassia Department - Hygiene and Public Health, Catania University, Italy.F, Italy, rossella.fazio@yahoo.it; Fulvio Costantidines, Research Group on Education for Health (GRES), Department of Humanities - University of Trieste., Italy, dott.costantinides@alice.it; Luca Leon, Research Group on Education for Health (GRES), Department of Humanities - University of Trieste., Italy, lucaleon425@hotmail.com; Roberto Fallico, Environmental and Food Hygiene Laboratory (LIAA) - G.F. Ingrassia Department - Hygiene and Public Health, Catania University, Italy.F, Italy, fallico@unict.it; Maria Fiore, Environmental and Food Hygiene Laboratory (LIAA) - G.F. Ingrassia Department - Hygiene and Public Health, Catania University, Italy.F, Italy, mfiore@unict.it;



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Background The electronic cigarette (e-cig) has experienced a rapid growth in popularity but little is known about their use patterns. **Aims** The purpose of this study was to examine e-cig usage patterns and reasons for use among smokers in Catania (South Italy).

Methods A cross-sectional survey was carried out by smokers. Participants attended the graduation sessions in Catania University were recruited in smokers areas and complete an anonymous and semi-structured self-administered questionnaire.

Results A total of 156 respondents (49.4% females and 46.8% males) participated in the survey. Median age of participants was 25 years (range 19-79). Occasional and current smokers were 5.3% and 68.4%, respectively. Thirty-four percent smoked 10 to 20 cig/day and 14.8% smoked more than 20 cig/day. The 26.3% of the participants had already tried e-cig, 22.5% used e-cigarettes for 90/1-365 days (median/range) and drew 85/2-100 puffs per day (median/range). Refill liquid without nicotine were used from 40.4% of the e-cig smokers while 27.7% and 29.8% of them used doses of nicotine equal to 12-14 mg and 16-24 mg, respectively. The 78.7% of smokers used the e-cig in smoke-free place. Participants used the e-cigarette either to reduce health risks (12.8%), to quit smoking (10.6%), to reduce their cigarette consumption (8.5%) and in order not to disturb other people in smoke-free places (8.5%).

Conclusions E-cigarettes were used mainly to reduce health risks, and may be helpful for this purpose. Until further scientific evidence is available, it is mandatory to regulate the production and marketing of e-cigs, to make them less attractive, to forbid their use in enclosed areas, and prevent them from being promoted.