

PEER REVIEW HISTORY

BMJ Open publishes all reviews undertaken for accepted manuscripts. Reviewers are asked to complete a checklist review form (<http://bmjopen.bmj.com/site/about/resources/checklist.pdf>) and are provided with free text boxes to elaborate on their assessment. These free text comments are reproduced below.

ARTICLE DETAILS

TITLE (PROVISIONAL)	The messages presented in online electronic cigarette promotions and discussions: A scoping review protocol
AUTHORS	McCausland, Kahlia; Maycock, Bruce; Jancey, Jonine

VERSION 1 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Erin Willis University of Colorado-Boulder, USA
REVIEW RETURNED	15-Aug-2017

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>The topic of electronic cigarettes is very important, and the current study extends our knowledge of messages that promote electronic cigarettes. Since such little regulation occurs online, it is critical to understand how these devices are being marketed now.</p> <p>The introduction is very well written and provides context for the study. Additionally, the authors cite a wide variety of literature from different fields of study.</p> <p>Methodology – scoping review</p> <p>This is a new method to me, and I appreciate the authors description in the method section. I think it would be beneficial if the authors provided rationale as to why a scoping review is a necessary addition to the literature. How does a scoping review of media messages of electronic cigarettes inform future research?</p> <p>How were the five key databases identified?</p> <p>Add one sentence describing Covidence.</p> <p>Page 7, line 4 – do you mean “lodged” or “logged”?</p> <p>Where are the results? Discussion?</p>
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REVIEWER	Anthony Laverty Imperial College London, England I have no competing interests to declare
REVIEW RETURNED	22-Aug-2017

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>Thanks for sending me this protocol which aims to identify and describe the messages contained in online advertisements for e-cigarettes. The manuscript makes a clear rationale for this study, and I do think that it has the potential to give some very interesting results</p> <p>My major question about the proposed methodology is the restriction to online advertisements only. This may well be justified on the grounds of feasibility, but this isn't the stated rationale. At the moment there seemed to me to be only one sentence in the introduction arguing that the internet is a key channel for e-cigarette marketing. This point should be expanded upon in some depth, as arguably the strength of the study rests on this distinction.</p> <p>I also wondered about the decision to exclude studies if they report messages across multiple forms of media without breaking them down. I can see that there may be value in sticking with media-specific findings, but without knowing what the review will find, there seems to be a risk that this is discarding potentially valuable information. For example, even if the authors have at the end to report on a combination of media, this would still be of interest. Otherwise the proposed methods seem to me to be appropriate. I found that the introduction would usefully benefit from some more on the specific issues of advertising and why this specifically is important. The authors mention at the end of the introduction that these findings would be important for regulation but the reader would benefit from a sense of what different countries are doing in terms of e-cigarette advertisements.</p> <p>In the dissemination section the authors mention that "advocacy will be key to informing policy makers" but again, some detail on the specifics of this in the context of regulating advertisements would be useful.</p> <p>Finally, the authors mention that this study will inform another study on Twitter use -more detail on this other study would help readers to situate these respective pieces of research</p>
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VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer 1:

Comment: I think it would be beneficial if the authors provided rationale as to why a scoping review is a necessary addition to the literature.

Response: Thank you for this comment. The following has been included on page 8 paragraph 1 which addresses why this scoping review is a valid addition to the literature. Findings from this scoping review will increase understanding of the types of electronic cigarette promotion and discussions occurring online. This may provide evidence that will inform the need for advertising restrictions, as well as stimulate further research to understand and combat the proliferation of this online advertising.

Comment: How does a scoping review of media messages of electronic cigarettes inform future research?

Response: We believe this has now been addressed in the previous comment.

Comment: How were the five key databases identified?

Response: The following has been added on page 5 paragraph 6 outlining why each of the databases were included:

The research question crosses subject areas, hence the Medline, Scopus, Informit and ProQuest databases were identified due to their multidisciplinary nature and broad scope. Google Scholar will provide a sound overview of what published material exists on the topic.

Comment: Add one sentence describing Covidence.

Response: The following has been added on page 6 paragraph 5:
Covidence is a not-for-profit service working in partnership with Cochrane to improve the production and use of systematic reviews for health and wellbeing. Covidence is a web-based software platform that streamlines the production of systematic reviews by supporting the key steps in the review process such as citation screening; full text review; risk of bias assessment; extraction of study characteristics and outcomes; and export of data and references.[67]

Comment: Page 7, line 4 – do you mean “lodged” or “logged”?

Response: This paragraph has been altered and the word removed.

Comment: Where are the results? Discussion?

Response: As this manuscript is a protocol paper outlining the proposed method to undertake a scoping review the results and discussion sections are not required. The publication of protocol papers enables researchers to obtain feedback on draft study protocols through peer review; makes available more information than what is currently required by trial registries; increases transparency, making it easier for others (editors, reviewers and readers) to see and understand any deviations from the protocol that occur during the conduct of the study; reduces duplication of research effort and promotes possible collaboration of researchers (as described by BMJ Open).

Reviewer 2:

Comment: My major question about the proposed methodology is the restriction to online advertisements only. This may well be justified on the grounds of feasibility, but this isn't the stated rationale. At the moment there seemed to me to be only one sentence in the introduction arguing that the internet is a key channel for e-cigarette marketing. This point should be expanded upon in some depth, as arguably the strength of the study rests on this distinction.

Response: Thank you for this comment, we agree that more emphasis should be placed on the internet being a key channel for electronic cigarette marketing. We believe the following adds to this argument (see page 3 paragraph 4).

There is increasing evidence of substantial financial investment by tobacco and other industry groups using websites, social media and other non-traditional marketing methods to increase the electronic cigarette market.[10, 41, 42] In the United States and Canada alone over \$2 million is spent annually on online electronic cigarette advertising.[43] The online social networking service, Twitter, with 328 million active monthly users[44] is regularly used as a promotional tool by electronic cigarette manufactures and retail outlets. For example, electronic cigarette tweets were found to increase 10-fold during 2009-2010, of which 93% were classified as advertising.[45] The rise of new media has enabled the tobacco industry to penetrate channels such as Twitter and YouTube with information offsetting tobacco control denormalisation strategies.[46, 47] of which the electronic cigarette industry is now capitalising on.[48]

Electronic cigarette companies are employing techniques previously used by the tobacco industry to influence young people's decision to use cigarettes.[49] These include the addition of sweet flavourings to e-liquid and promoting products using youth-resonant themes, such as sex appeal, rebellion, social status and celebrity testimonials.[50, 51] In addition, electronic cigarettes are being advertised as a harm reduction alternative[10, 41] and promoted in a way to create a vaping culture that appeals to youth (even non-smokers),[52, 53] potentially supporting the creation of a whole new generation of nicotine addicted young people, normalising not only vaping but also renormalising smoking in public places, and serving as a gateway to tobacco use.[54-56]

Comment: I also wondered about the decision to exclude studies if they report messages across multiple forms of media without breaking them down. I can see that there may be value in sticking with media-specific findings, but without knowing what the review will find, there seems to be a risk that this is discarding potentially valuable information. For example, even if the authors have at the end to report on a combination of media, this would still be of interest. Otherwise the proposed methods seem to me to be appropriate.

Response: We agree, however, from preliminary searches we have found occasional studies looking at combined media, such as Twitter and Facebook, with the results having not been reported separately for each media. If the results of multiple media are presented separately in a study, then the study will be included in the review. We hope this is satisfactory and now adequately described in the manuscript.

The following has been altered on page 5 paragraph 5:

Studies reporting multiple media will be excluded (e.g. analysis of tweets and posts from Twitter and Facebook respectively) unless the results for each media are reported separately.

Comment: I found that the introduction would usefully benefit from some more on the specific issues of advertising and why this specifically is important. The authors mention at the end of the introduction that these findings would be important for regulation but the reader would benefit from a sense of what different countries are doing in terms of e-cigarette advertisements.

Response: The following has been included on page 3 paragraph 3, we hope this gives some sense of what regulation is occurring in other countries.

Regulation of electronic cigarettes differs among countries, ranging from no regulation, licensing as medicines, to complete prohibition.[35] For example, as of 2016 across the European Union electronic cigarettes cannot be advertised or promoted directly or indirectly, including via internet and commercial e-mail.[36] Similarly, the United States Food and Drug Administration recently extended its regulatory power to include electronic cigarettes, meaning they intend to regulate the marketing, labelling and manufacturing of these devices.[37, 38] Despite this, evidence suggests online marketing of electronic cigarettes continues.[39, 40]

Comment: In the dissemination section the authors mention that “advocacy will be key to informing policy makers” but again, some detail on the specifics of this in the context of regulating advertisements would be useful.

Response: The findings of the review will inform the advocacy undertaken, therefore it is difficult to determine what will occur until the scoping review is complete. The results paper for this study will be the forum where this comment is better addressed.

We have added to the dissemination section of the paper on page 7 – Ethics and dissemination, which now reads:

The results of the scoping review will be published in a peer reviewed journal and presented at national/international conferences and symposia. Additionally, findings will be distributed via academic, research and community publication, and news and social media platforms, such as The Conversation, Research Gate and Twitter, in order to increase circulation. Advocacy, such as discussions with, and presentations to professional associations will be key to informing policy makers of regulatory and health issues that need to be addressed. The expertise of the research team (health promotion, public health, knowledge translation) will support broad dissemination of the findings.

Comment: Finally, the authors mention that this study will inform another study on Twitter use - more detail on this other study would help readers to situate these respective pieces of research.

Response: Further detail on this study has been provided on page 8 - Implications:

This study will access public Australian Twitter data through TrISMA (Tracking Infrastructure for Social Media Analysis),[69] a powerful new framework for tracking, storing, and processing social media communication activities of Australian users. The study aims to compare electronic cigarette Twitter discussion in 2012, 2014 and 2016 using a triaxial classification scheme to capture tweet sentiment, theme and author category.

VERSION 2 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Anthony Laverty Imperial College London England
REVIEW RETURNED	05-Oct-2017
GENERAL COMMENTS	I think this is ready to publish, so well done