

Cancerworld

The prevalence of vaping among cancer survivors is worrying

Elena Riboldi / 20 April 2020



The use of electronic cigarettes, or vaping, seems to be particularly common among young cancer survivors: according to a survey on a sample of nearly 1,500 young adult (YA) cancer survivors, just published as [a research letter in JAMA Oncology](#), almost half have ever used e-cigarettes and more than one quarter are current users. Notably, these rates are higher than those recorded among peers without a history of cancer. The high prevalence of vaping in YA cancer survivors suggests that this population may require targeted interventions to quit a habit that is considered dangerous for health.

“Young adults with a history of cancer have previously been shown to engage in high-risk health behaviours more often than their healthy peers despite greater health risks and their susceptibility to late effects of treatment after cancer” explains Helen Parsons, associate professor at School of Public Health of the University of Minnesota and first author of the letter. “However, prior research has not evaluated e-cigarette use among YA cancer survivors relative to their peers without cancer.”

The study was performed using data from the 2018 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). In 2018, this annual telephone survey about health-related topics involved nearly 55,000 US citizens aged 18 to 39 years, 2,1% of whom had a history of cancer.

The proportion of individuals who reported having ever used e-cigarettes was higher among YA cancer survivors than among their peers without a cancer history (46.7% vs 39.1%), so was the proportion of current e-cigarette users (31.3% vs 26.9%). The odds ratio indicated a significant association between cancer history and any use and current use of e-cigarettes. This was true across nearly all demographic subgroups. In adjusted logistic regression analyses, young adults who were non-Hispanic white, younger, male, and living in urban areas were more likely to have ever tried or currently use e-cigarettes. Among cancer survivors, young adults living in urban areas were more likely to have experienced vaping and those who were younger and male were more likely to continue e-cigarette use.

“We found disproportionately higher rates of vaping among YA cancer survivors across nearly all demographic subgroups” the authors conclude. “These results suggest that current efforts to reduce vaping may benefit from targeted interventions among YA cancer survivors”.