

# **STEP-UP on vaping: parent engagement and support needs in addressing adolescent vaping**

## **Authors:**

Bialek C<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>, Fee M<sup>1,2,4</sup>, Mellors K<sup>1,2,4</sup>, Laing C<sup>5</sup>, Barnes C<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>, McCrabb S<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>, Turon H<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>, Wolfenden L<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>, Bartlem K<sup>1,3,4,5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Hunter New England Population Health, Hunter New England Local Health District, Wallsend, New South Wales, Australia*

<sup>2</sup>*School of Medicine and Public Health, University of Newcastle, Callaghan, New South Wales, Australia*

<sup>3</sup>*Population Health Research Program, Hunter Medical Research Institute, New Lambton Heights, New South Wales, Australia*

<sup>4</sup>*National Centre of Implementation Science, University of Newcastle, Callaghan, New South Wales, Australia*

<sup>5</sup>*School of Psychological Sciences, University of Newcastle, Callaghan, New South Wales, Australia*

**Background:** Vaping among adolescents is a growing public health concern associated with nicotine dependence, subsequent tobacco use, impaired academic performance, and other health related harms. Parents play an integral role in shaping adolescent vaping related attitudes and behaviours and including them in prevention efforts is critical. However, there is limited understanding of how parents engage in vaping prevention and what supports they need to effectively do so.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional study was conducted with 125 Australian parents of adolescents aged 12-18 years. Parents were invited to complete a survey to capture information regarding conversations parents have had with their child around vaping. The survey consisted of 15 items guided by the COM-B framework to assess parent capability, opportunity and motivation to have such conversations with their child. Parent attitudes towards the role of schools in addressing adolescent vaping were also examined.

**Results:** Preliminary descriptive findings show most parents (n=118, 94%) had discussed vaping with their child in the past 12 months, commonly focusing on why it is important not to vape (n=113, 90%) and setting clear expectations (n=88, 70%). Almost all parents (n=123, 98%) agreed that talking about vaping is part of their parental role. However, fewer felt capable of providing coping strategies and refusal skills (n=88, 70%), confident in their knowledge of laws and legislation (n=78, 62%), or able to support a vaping quit attempt (n= 90, 72%). Most parents (n=118, 94%) agreed that schools should have a role in addressing adolescent vaping, though only 23% (n=29) reported their child's school had provided supports to assist them in addressing vaping.

## **Conclusions:**

Parents are highly motivated and engaged in conversations about vaping but report gaps in knowledge, skills, and school-based support. Strengthening parent-school partnerships and providing accessible, evidence-based resources could enhance parents' capacity to prevent and respond to adolescent vaping.

Word count: 300

**Disclosure of interest statement:**

Courtney Barnes receives salary support from an NSW Ministry of Health PRSP Research Fellowship. Luke Wolfenden receives salary support from an NHMRC Investigator (L1) Fellowship. Kate Bartlem receives salary support from an NHMRC Early Career Fellowship.