|  |
| --- |
| **Fruit, candy and dessert flavours for nicotine: E-cigarette online marketing practices where their advertising is prohibited, and the safeguards for children** |
| **Background**  We studied online e-cigarette marketing in a jurisdiction (New Zealand - NZ) where e-cigarette sales are legal, but advertising of them is prohibited.  **Methods**  We explored the use by NZ e-cigarette online vendors aiming at the NZ market of websites and social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. We noted age verification, promotional strategies, flavour promotion, use of social networking services, presence and types of health warnings and prices offered.  **Results**  ***Websites***  We found 59 NZ vendor websites. Among them, 59.3% (n=35) used one or more forms of age verification. A majority (67.8%, n=40) had no detectable health warnings, and only 15 (25.4%) mentioned nicotine addiction.  Most 91.5% (n=54) websites used one or more social networking or video sharing sites in their marketing. Most (81.4%, n=48) used one or more forms of promotional strategies such as discounts, reward points, coupon codes, lay buy points, interest-free payments and vouchers. Among them, 42.4% (n=25) offered more than 50 flavours and 37.3% offered more than 50 fruit/candy/dessert flavours. Across the websites, the average price of the cheapest e-cigarette found was $36.65. The average price of the cheapest 10ml e-liquid bottle on websites was $7.23.  ***Facebook***  We found 61 accounts associated with NZ vendors that required no age verification. Among them, 100% (n=61) did not mention any type of health warning, 69% (n=42) promoted e-cigarette device through their posts and 78.7% (n=48) had posts about e-liquid/flavour promotion.  ***Twitter***  We found 29 accessible accounts associated with NZ vendors. Among them, 96.6% (n=28) had no health warning. We found e-cigarette device promotion on 55.2% (n=16) and e-liquid/flavour promotion on 51.7% (n=15).  ***YouTube***  We found 56 video links from NZ vendor websites. Only one (1.8%) required sign in to access the video. Among the 55 accessible videos, none of them mentioned any type of health warnings.  **Discussion**  Despite the prohibition by the NZ Government of advertising in NZ of e-cigarettes on any media, the majority of NZ vendors marketed online. Monitoring of the activities of NZ e-cigarette vendors on their websites, social networking sites and video-sharing sites is required to prevent the exposure of those aged under 18 years. NZ policy makers should consider the development of robust age verification process, health warnings, and the prohibition of use of social networking sites and video-sharing sites in e-cigarette marketing.  **Key words:** Vaping, websites, social networking, online marketing, regulation, policy. |