

A blunt challenge to some common arguments against e-cigarettes

written by Clive Bates | 4 December 2014



“Live with it”

Professor John Britton is in the top tier of public health professionals in the UK. He is [Professor of Epidemiology at the University of Nottingham](#), Director of the [UK Centre of Tobacco Control Studies](#) and [Chair of the Royal College of Physicians Tobacco Advisory Group](#). He has been one of the most important influences on the generally positive approach the UK takes to tobacco harm reduction over at least the last 15 years. A selection of relevant work he has led includes: [RCP\(2000\)](#), [RCP\(2007\)](#), [RCP\(2008\)](#), [PHE\(2014\)](#) and [Thorax\(2103\)](#). And he still runs a respiratory clinic and see people who are ill. So it is always interesting to hear what he has to say *and how he chooses to say it*. Directly and bluntly, as it turns out...

Here are two slides from a presentation he gave at the [UK Society for Behavioural Medicine Conference](#) on 3rd December 2014. He picks out common arguments in the left column and addresses them pragmatically in the right column. This is what real public health looks like in my view.

Common arguments against electronic cigarettes

- Perpetuate addiction
- Health risks unknown
- Definitely not safe
- Vapour may harm others
- Products standards vary
- Smokers may dual use
- Renormalise smoking
- Will be promoted to non-smokers
- Gateway to smoking
- So what?
- Much less than smoking
- The perfect vs the good
- User courtesy
- Need standards
- NRT is licensed for dual use
- No evidence that it does
- Regulate promotion
- No evidence so far

Common arguments against electronic cigarettes

- Fire risks from chargers
- 'Dark marketing'
- Cannibalising SSS uptake
- Manufacturers cant be trusted
- Tobacco industry involved
- Smoking prevalence is falling
- Smokers can use SSS to quit
- Smokers should use SSS
- We didn't think of them
- Use the right charger
- Monitor and regulate
- Integrate into SSS
- Unlike pharma?
- Popular Front of Judea
- Yes, but not fast enough
- <10% of smokers do
- Quit or die?
- Live with it

I hope the bullshitters, fear-mongers and ideologues are paying attention. I'm not going to further dissect or discuss this. But you can... in the comments.

Note: SSS = Stop Smoking Services provided by the National Health Service.