Where is the humility? Where is the empathy?

written by Clive Bates | 30 December 2013



He gets it, why can't the public health establishment?

With the approach of 2014 and New Year resolutions under negotiation, my thoughts and good wishes turn to all those smokers out there who would like to stop smoking – as in stop inhaling burning particles of organic matter and hot toxic gases deep into the lungs. *I hope they give vaping a try.* An e-cig is working well for my brother and I'm really glad about that – he's smoked for about 30 years and has never intended to stop, but this has all but ended his smoking over the last nine months. Not good enough for MHRA, Brussels, WHO and CR-UK of course, but *he's pleased, and so am I*. It reminds me that there are great stories about e-cigs, about personal triumphs, lives transformed and people getting back in control. I love these stories.

But there is a striking contrast between the often moving, thrilling and visceral human stories told by vapers and the attitude and language of the bossy bureaucrats and fake experts in public health who claim to know better. I ask where is the humility? Where is the empathy? Some examples from them, and then we can contrast these with the words of vapers:

- The 'thoughts' of Professor Martin McKee on e-cigarette marketing *"But can't e-cigarettes help people to quit? This is the line that the tobacco*

companies are pushing in some countries…"

- The views of Simon Chapman here: *"But the needs of often desperate smokers must not become the tail that wags the dog of tobacco control policy"*
- The idiosyncratic ideas of Anna Gilmore about business and economics, shown in The Lancet: *"TTCs [trans-national tobacco corporations] are now investing in e-cigarettes, which needs careful monitoring because TTC control of this market would serve to maintain the dominance of the cigarette."*
- The blog of Cancer Research UK: *E-cigarettes the unanswered questions* an exercise in simpering doubt-casting and fear-mongering. The comments to the blog are very good.
- The stridently stupid position statement of IUATLD, which devotes not one word to any benefits or opportunities for respiratory health to balance the stream of falsehoods, half-truths and non-sequiturs it has deployed against e-cigarettes
- All utterances on the subject by Professor Stanton Glantz *"We are witnessing the beginning of a new phase of the nicotine epidemic and a new route to nicotine addiction for kids"* here (with brutal rebuttal here and here).
- The doctor-knows-best vacuity of the BMA, telling football clubs not to work with e-cig companies: *"Sport is a healthy activity and [you] should be leading by example to encourage healthy living rather than advertising a smoking product, which contains the addictive substance nicotine"*.
- The World Health Organisation position on ecigs – including its deranged tweetbomb, the fail grade ideas of Roberto Bertollini, and the petulant dismissal of actual success by Kristina Mauer-Stender – the WHO's officials in Europe.

Where is the humility? The implicit disapproval and sense that the views of users are worthless comes over quite strongly in the works of this faction in public health. But you would think they would be a little more humble after the disgraceful fiasco of trying to get e-cigarettes banned in the UK in 2010/11, through the MHRA consultation on nicotine products in which they favoured removal of e-cigs from the market in either 21 days (or after a year for some). Fortunately, hundreds of vapers told the real story with eloquence and poise, and the prohibitionists had to back down – not with any apology or contrition

mind you. You might also expect them to be a bit less cocky after their 21-year error in getting snus banned. Everything they said about snus, they are now saying about e-cigs, but everything they said about snus was wrong. It hasn't stopped them, calling for snus to remain banned, so we can safely assume it is not evidence or health that drives them, or that the loss of a few lives matters to them (update: or perhaps 290,000 lives per year if Sweden's success was repeated across the EU – even if a small fraction of Sweden's success was attained, many thousand premature deaths might be avoided)

Where is the empathy? Surely if you work in public health, these are the stories that make it worthwhile to come to work. That doesn't mean swapping anecdote for evidence. But it does mean approaching your work with something resembling humanity – and, yes, some empathy for the people involved and their experiences (not accusing them of 'astroturfing' because you don't understand them, have done no research and can't be bothered to find out). Even now, most grandees of the 'tobacco control' establishment would avoid meeting vapers if they could, and don't really understand the modern and assertive rallying cry '*nothing about me, without me*' in public health.

Testimonies from vapers. I don't solicit personal testimonies – but here are a few that have been left on this site. I hope you feel as inspired by them as I do. If you work in public health, and you are working against e-cigarettes, I hope you feel ashamed and will reflect on how you could do a better job in 2014. Here we go…

> *In one year I have gone from 60+ a day roll ups to zero nicotine. on my own! My choice, My decision and yet there are those that wish to take this away from me. Why? It obviously works and works Well. I have probably helped somewhere close to 50 others also stop smoking completely and are vaping only, Just from my example and helping them with info. So that is now 51 people that no longer smoke, 51 people that will have Less affect on the NHS, 51 people that will spend less time off sick in their later working years, 51 families and friends that will no longer breathe in second hand smoke.*

> *In 5 days (the 25th sept) I will have been tobacco free for 2 years, I smoked for over 40 years & had given up giving up … that is until I tried an ecig. I stopped*

smoking within 24hrs, I now feel fitter my bank account is noticeably fitter, It's like I turned the clock back 20 years. But then public health people are not really interested in people like me because I don't know what I'm talking about.

I am 48 now and have been tobacco free for more than two years, with only 3 one day lapses, one of which was last week. Tobacco use has been a way of life and experience has shown I will never be free from the desire having quit for more than 12 months 3 times in the past. Vaping has freed me form the terror of tobacco, with out it I will revert sooner or later.

I will not pretend to be an academic, but all I can state is my own truth. After 47 years f smoking (apart from my two last 6 months of pregnancy) I finally feel alive again. Everyone I meet says I look 10 years younger. I feel so amazingly healthy now just after 3 months of vaping, the first two months I still smoked 3-5 cigarettes a day, but now I have no desire for them. I can comfortably walk for an hour whereas before 5 mins was my maximum. I suffered and was phama drugged fr 30 years with panic attacks and now they have virtually disappeared. It was the cigarettes and the awful chemicals in them that were causing this problem. Now I am Free!! I defy anyone to take this away from me…….

Having finally quit smoking after 20 years and trying everything from the useless gum to the black pit of despair and rage that is Champix, it is heartbreaking that the one thing that really works for me is being attacked and threatened by powerful officials whose job is supposed to be about helping me. It's like I have been trapped in a burning building and have just burst out of the fire exit, taken a gasp of clean air and then run straight into a fireman who tells me "I'm afraid you'll have to go back inside sir, this fire exit hasn't been properly tested yet

I was a smoker for 39 years. When I first quit I was using nicotine lozenges but found that I could not reduce the amount of lozenges I need per day. After 2 years of using them they began to have a negative effect on my teeth. My tooth enamel was wearing away and it caused the loss of several teeth. Faced with this I knew I had to give the lozenges up but also knew I was still addicted to

nicotine. The last thing I wanted to do was go back to cigarettes so I decided to try e-cigs. I must say that they are working!! No issues with my teeth and most importantly I have not returned to cigarettes.

In my life, I have seen how vaping has taken people away from smoking. I am a smoker that smoked for 50 years, determined never to stop and now, accidentally, a vaper. I promote it all the time. I know my experiences are only "anecdotes" and are not science, but they do not bear out what I am told by our rulers – NICE,BMA,BMJ etc.

Suffering from anxiety over issues of debates to ban vaping or regulate it. My husband is an over 50 year smoker, been coughing, getting lots of flu like symptoms. He was put on Champix which make him very ill and sick, so suddenly started smoking more when he stopped these tablets. However, since the 6th March started vaping and never touched a cigarette since. I am glad e-cigs are here and glad for there invention. They are only moaning about the nicotine, yet Cancer Research have stated that a cigarette has 4000 poisons that are harmful and nicotine wasn't the problem. E cigs should have more support because it seems that nicotine patches and gum really have proved not to be 100% successful, why try to stop the next best thing on the market.

I was a smoker for 30-35 years, I tried an e-cig & my tobacco consumption dropped to 1/4 in the first week, I bought a second e-cig & I found no time to smoke.That was 6 months ago & I've not touched a cigarette since. I'm now mixing my own e-liquids and even though I'm not working, I have found the money saved allows me to buy gifts for my family,fuel for my car,pay the bills etc.

I never wanted to quit smoking. I was a cancer epidemiologist who taught students about smoking and lung cancer and still continued to smoke. I knew the risks but I enjoyed smoking, collecting lighters (especially Zippos), the ritual of transferring cigarettes into a nice case before going out, the maintenance of my petrol lighters, having something to do with my hands when nervous, and the pleasure of a long draw on the cigarette itself. There were also things I didn't like about smoking; namely no longer being able to smoke in

pubs or at social events, having to go out in the cold and wet, the waste of money, having my breath and clothes smell and the probability that it would harm my health.
Vaping gives me all the things I enjoyed without any of the things I didn't like. In the long term vaping may have adverse consequences on my health, but the cumulative evidence to date suggests this will be considerably less harmful than continuing to smoke.

im a hopless long term heavy smoker, i was smoking 20, to 40 a day plus a pack of 12.5mg gv baccy if i was drinking at the same time, im now classed as a non smoker and i cant stand the smell of smokes any more, i haven't touched a real smoke for over 2 years now and i owe it all to ecigs and the best thing is my dad who had smoked all my life is on ecigs as well and my best freind is also on them. we all started at 36 mg nicotine liquid on inadequite cig a like devices and now we are all sporting big mods with at least vivi nova tanks and were cutting down our nicotine intake eg im on 24 mg now and thinking of going lower soon. the best thing is we dont harm people around us and the harm to our selves is very much greatly reduced so i can enjoy my ecig and my gummi bear flavour im 30 year old and my dad is like 50 odd and he likes the candy floss flavour so older people like the flavours that people try to say are aimed at kids… i just ordered more gummi bear flavour 24mg :) i felt guilty smoking but im glad i switched i can do guilt free vaping at pennys a day (i use between 4 to 6 milli litres a day at 24 mg strength)… it has saved my life i can taste food better and i dont get short of breath like when i smoked, istarted smoking at 13, im also getting a lot less chest pains that have plagued me for years :)

My wife & I quit smoking 1st Jan 2014 – cold turkey style, & for health reasons (we didn't exactly want to). By day three, I was crawling the walls – as was she. We got into vaping through the advice of a good friend. I find it to be every bit as pleasurable as smoking &, being weak willed, I can't think of another way I'd have stayed 'quit' for this long. I feel better for stopping smoking & my sense of smell has improved greatly: after a week of quitting, I noticed how much my car stank of stale smoke, it was horrible! It really gets my back up – the fact that whenever a new idea materialises which offers a viable – often better alternative to a accepted norm, an ogre with vested interests & political pull, comes to shut it down. That said, it's nice to see cracks appearing, opinions

changing & lies being exposed, with this particular battle. It's been 44 days since I quit smoking. I do not intend, nor desire to go back to it, thanks to vaping products. Your open-mindedness to these innovations is commendable, Louise. Thank you for contributing to the improvement of public health.

I switched to vaping nearly a year ago, having smoked for about 45 years! As I'm quite technically minded and internet-savvy, I was able to do this with the help of the various forums and shopping sites out there. I know many older people wouldn't be able (or willing) to do this, and would benefit from a local support service to help them switch.

Vaping has probably saved my wife's and my own life's, I a smoker for 50 years, nothing I have ever tried has had the impact of vaping, this alone was the only thing that saved me, how can governments legislate against something that is saving so many peoples life's.

I was a smoker for over 35 years and tried quitting many times using patches, gum, mouth spray, inhalators and pills. Nothing worked for me. In March 2013, I had a heart attack. After having angioplasty and a stent fitted, I was told that if I didn't stop smoking, I could be dead within a year. Once again, I was given patches and a nasal spray. I only managed to stay off the cigarettes for a few weeks, the whole time was awful. I still had terrible cravings and withdrawal symptoms. Three weeks ago, I bought myself an e-cig. I started using it that very night, and three weeks later, I'm still off the real cigarettes. What's more, I have no cravings or withdrawal symptoms whatsoever. My breathing has already improved vastly. I can now walk further and faster without getting out of breath. I'm so glad I made the switch to e-cigs. I know that I'll never smoke a real cigarette again.

I'm a new "vaper" (3 weeks now) and these devices have given me hope – at last! – that I might eventually kick my tobacco habit of over 40 years. Already I've reduced from over 30 a day to around 10 a day – and its been easy. I don't have that sense of panic and deprivation that has always hit me when I've tried to cut down before, using NRTs prescribed by my GP (at substantial cost to taxpayers!) that just don't do the trick for me. I know that e-cigarettes may not

be COMPLETELY safe, but I have read a LOT about the research that has been done and am completely certain that they are many times safer than tobacco cigarettes! And what, in this life, can we say is COMPLETELY safe anyway? I don't think the licensed NRTs (or any other drug prescribed for me by my doctor) can claim to be completely safe. I go out and breathe car fumes every day – and I know that's not good for me. I drink alcohol, I eat "ready meals" containing additives, I eat fruit and veg that have been sprayed with toxins, I cross the road, etc. Life is not completely safe – and I would not want it to be! But I WOULD like to stop doing something that I know will shorten my life and probably in a very nasty way….i.e. I want to stop smoking tobacco – before I get full-blown COPD, for preference.

At a personal level, I have to hope – against hope – that I will not be forced back into being a 30+ a day smoker. Started experimenting with cigarettes at school – wanted to look "cool" and was not really aware of how harmful they were (it was 1960s). But consumption rose dramatically to around a pack a day when I was around 18 and at university – oh, the stress of those exams! Then gradually crept up over the years – always increasing after every failed QUIT attempt. Tried all the NRTs – none of them worked for me. After more than 40 years of heavy smoking, I had given up trying to give up. Then, 4 weeks ago, tried my first e-cigarette. Amazed – able to cut down by 50% overnight. Now down by 66%, to just half a pack a day. And not struggling with it. So hopeful now that I will be able to get off tobacco completely over the next couple of months. Maybe the New Year Resolution I used to make every year – to stop smoking – will actually come true next year!! Please, please, please, tobacco control authorities everywhere – don't take this lifeline away from us!

I smoked for 45 years and tried every NRT product available, none of them worked. I continued to smoke even though my health was getting worse, resulting in COPD and using oxygen daily. September 2011 I discovered e-cigarettes and they worked. It was like someone handed me a miracle. In less than a week I stopped using regular cigarettes. I haven't had a tobacco cigarette since. I wish the MP's and MEP's would understand how much e-cigarettes have helped thousands of people just like me.

I am not involved in the ecig industry at all, except as a user of ecigs who's now

managed 6 months without smoking tobacco and who's converted several other people to ecigs. I haven't felt this good since my teens (and that was a looong time ago).

At the beginning of this year I purchased an "e-cigarette" as a replacement for tobacco burning cigarettes!
As well as, i am sure, the risk to my health is lessened, i find "VAPING" a much more socially acceptable method of tobacco usage, I dont cough as much, I can breathe a lot better, I dont spread second hand smoke to my 10 grandchildren, or anyone! and I dont get smelly clothes! I enjoy Vaping and have not had a cigarette since i bought my e-cigarette but i can still enjoy the tobacco, in as it is a much safer delivery system, and i can cut down the amount of nicotine,until eventually no nicotine whatever.

My experience is that a lot of what a smoker does is down to habit!, make a coffee, light a cigarette!, get in the car light a cigarette! eat a meal finish with a cigarette! however with my e-cigarette that habit is not a problem, and the flavours make the experience a lot more enjoyable!! The loss of use of these products would be a bad thing for me, as I do not want to restart using conventional fire burning cigarettes, with all their obvious possible dangers to my health

Last year i was diagnosed with COPD a result of 40 years cigarette smoking. My lung function test was appauling. I was distraught of course who wouldnt be, smoking had been my enjoyment, so i was unhappy at the thought of stopping. On the way home we stopped to do some shopping and I spotted the ECIG i prompty bought a kit (2 ecigs) one for me one for hubby. As smokers of 40 cigs per day EACH we were thinking if this works and gets us to kick that habit it will be a miracle. MIRACLES happen, we never touched a cig since and that was july 2nd 2012. Now i recently was tested and my lung capacity on 3 tests were improved by 10%, 10% and 11% so who the heck can tell me they are harming anyone ??? they have improved my lung function dramatically.

My father died a horrible death of lung cancer and so did my uncle. I am 52 and was smoking up to 50 cigaretes a day. My lungs were so bad I expected to

develop lung cancer at any moment. I messed around with a couple of E cigs and they did not work almost going to abandon it and Found the E-VIC. Incredible results. Just stopped cigarettes dead and have not touched one since I had it. Can ran up the stairs, the house is cleaner and I feel fitter. No craving for one even when I got a letter through the post today to say I have had an abnormal Mammogram and I have to go to the Hospital at 9am Monday. The Irony of it …….

I am quite new to vaping,and i have to say it is the best way i have found to give up the dreaded cigarettes,and i have tried almost everything on the market before.I had not realized how controversial the ecig has become,i thought that all the people in power etc would have been praising these products that is really doing an absolute brilliant job to eventually rid us of smoking, isnt this what everyone wanted including us smokers too.

I used to smoke about 40 cigarettes a day and did that for almost 30 years. I have been using e-cigs for 10 months and am feeling very much healthier and am also saving around £400 each month. I can't see how the governments of this world can effectively ban e-cigs by using legislation and keep any credibility. I'm no scientist (i'm a joiner) but from what i have read most experts in this field say e-cigs are a much safer alternative to smoking tobacco. The very fact that they are trying to legislate/ban e-cigs , in my opinion, makes them no better than murdering, drug dealing gangsters fighting to keep their profit margins up.

Hi I'm 58 have been smoking since I was 11 I have severe osteo arthritis in both hips nothing to do with smoking but I am on a large dose of morphine for the pain the side effects of this is you tend to fall asleep while just sitting any time of the day which is no good whilst holding a lit cigarette I have been vapeing now for the last five weeks started on a tornado and worked my way upto a vape pro so the most damage I can do now is break s toe so using an ecig has probably stopped me setting fire to myself

im a 64 year old senior citizen who has smoked since i was 18. because of this habit i encountered COPD. my asthama, was getting worse. i was given a home

care giver because i could go 15 steps without huffing and puffing. my care giver sharon graham showed me her tornado t e cigarette. i even tried it. id made up my mind that i was finished with smoking with all the chemicals and not breathing. i went on line and bought my own e cig. its been over 3 1/2 years that i have never touched a regular cig. my doctor says that he has seen a really big change in my lungs and breathing. he told me if i hadnt have stopped the regular cig i would have most likely died. my mothe died at 54 with the same disease. if she had the e cig im sure she would still be alive today. thankyou totally wicked. im alive today because i feel i made the right choice.

As a realist, I always knew that smoking tobacco was bad for my health, but I also accepted that I didn't really want to give it up. Even if I had decided to give up, nicotine patches, gums and sprays were never going to be the answer. So e-cigs have proved to be the perfect solution: I get the nicotine delivered in a form I enjoy using, and as a DIY user, it has become something of a hobby.

I have been smoking -2 packs a day- for 33 years. I've tried to stop smoking several times, following several methods, without any success.
3 years ago i've switched to electronic cigarettes. Since that day i've stopped smoking the real thing. Plain simple and -yes- that easy.
Now i can climb stairs without starting to gasp, i have discovered again a Whole world of odors and tastes, and recent lungs' x-rays show a clear improvement of my health over previous clinical examinations. And, last but not least, my chances of getting lung cancer are decreasing as time goes by. Why are they trying to make all this more difficult to achieve?

I have COPD, diagnosed 7 years ago after 40 years of smoking. I have been using e-cigarettes for over 3 years now. Every year I undergo lung function tests to check the progress of my COPD and there has been no deterioration of my condition during this time. The test results have remained static. A recent CAT scan revealed no 'nasties' in my lungs. Had I continued to smoke tobacco I doubt the result would be the same.

I too had been smoking since I was 12 years old and I'm now 43 and started vaping 5 months ago and I love it! I cannot stress that more. Everyone I know

has said they never ever thought I would give up and thanks to my e-cig I have proved them all wrong. AND have managed to help lots of other friends quit too in the process by recommending the e-cigs. I have no intention of giving up and my aim is to have zero nicotine ones but I shall always use them because I loved smoking despite its obvious health issues. I don't understand all the government bull but I'm guessing its all about money and stupid red tape. I thought they'd encourage people to find alternatives to tobacco but no. I support & will do all I can to help to keep things exactly as they are.

i also smoked for 40 years+, but then tried a ecig also from Totally Wicked, i am pleased to say that i have not had or wanted a a cigarette now for 3 years and 10 days, but i want to stree that if this stupid ruling comes to pass, then i know i will return to cigarettes, that is after i have used up my stock pile of e-liquid etc, which should last me a good few years yet i would also like to add, that both my doctor and the whole surgery fully support the use of ecigs after i should them to them, and they have now had several other patients give up smoking by using ecig, for whom patches etc did not work for them

after 54 years of smoking and having tried every thing the nhs have given me to kick my habit I have failed. I have now packed up smoking now for 15 months thanks to electronic cigarettes & personalvapour.com so please don't ban them they can help 1000s of us get of the killing cigaretts YES BAN THE REAL THING

I smoked for 29 years. Tried many, many times to give up using the usual over the counter remedies but because I actually enjoy smoking nothing worked for me. In November of 2012 for the hell of it I ordered an e-cigarette kit online, and from the moment of my first vape I haven't touched a real cigarette since. Indeed, the packet of rolling tobacco I was using at the time still lies, half used, beside me on my desk. I am, and continue to be amazed just how painless this switch has been. So, imagine I and my girlfriend's feelings, having so recently found a way we can both give up the weed forever, to discover that this incredibly poor directive is threatening to make it virtually impossible for us to get nicotine juice in the levels we need to make the switch worthwhile. There can be absolutely no doubt, that if it goes through we will definitely go back to smoking cigarettes if we can't get quality nicotine juice to continue vaping.

Of course, these are a tiny fraction of those committing their experience – I think usually hoping that others will experience the same or simple out of excitement about the change they've experienced. Nor do I think this is worthless evidence just because it isn't a randomised controlled trial – I take it as part of the evidential picture. And I like reading them! See more at:

- CASAA testimonials
- Michael Siegel's blog
- E-cigarette Direct
- A Google search will bring up many more

And if you'd like to submit your own experience for posterity, the American group CASAA has a great facility for collecting testimonials.

If you are trying to stop toxic smoke entering your lungs, GOOD LUCK WITH VAPING!