You have been QUALIFIED for a smokeless e-cig starter kit

Kate Hunt,^1^ Helen Sweeting^2^ 

Shortly after the shock of seeing e-cigarette advertising on television, an unsolicited e-mail arrived promoting an ‘e-cig starter kit’ (figure 1). This showed ‘Megan’ (attractive, slim, elegant, professional, confident and happy) ‘smoking’ an e-cigarette, apparently on a plane. Incongruously, the e-cigarette billows smoke. The sender’s address and titles of embedded links suggest the ease of trying e-cigarettes, and that e-cigarettes are healthy and inoffensive. Ingeniously, the advert can be read as showing that holding a cigarette object is attractive and socially desirable, and that e-cigarettes are (somewhat) distinct from ‘ordinary’ cigarettes.

Emerging research raises concerns over whether e-cigarettes renormalise and reglamourise smoking and/or act as a gateway to smoking.\(^1\)\(^,\)\(^2\) Within present legislation, ‘Megan’ can ‘smoke’ her e-cigarette in public spaces because e-cigarettes are not subject to smoke-free regulation. They can also be advertised, although some may question whether a smoking e-cigarette complies with guidelines.

In 2013, US Democratic Congress members wrote to e-cigarette manufacturers regarding marketing tactics likely to ‘hook’ young people,\(^3\) and posted a presentation highlighting parallels with earlier cigarette marketing.\(^4\) As gender and health researchers, we also note the strong resemblance to images of women in advertising which so successfully drew earlier generations of women to smoking.\(^5\)\(^–\)\(^7\)

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![Figure 1 Screenshot of unsolicited email.](image-url)
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