

North Dakota

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VOICES OF THE
e-cigarettes are
missing the facts

By ERIN HILL-OBAN
Bismarck

There's been a lot of buzz lately about electronic cigarettes and the rise in popularity (and sales). They're seen all across the country, including in North Dakota.

Whether news and opinions have come from the mouths of trusted news sources, Big Tobacco (which now manufactures e-cigarettes), health professionals or e-cigarette users themselves, we should all stay informed.

Tobacco Free North Dakota would like to add the voice of our organization and members to the conversation. We have no interest in scaring the public; rather, we feel education and information are important. What we know about e-cigarettes for certain, unfortunately, is pretty minimal.

As of today, there is not enough data or studies to

determine how safe these products are, or to prove e-cigarettes are effective cessation devices. Tobacco companies promote e-cigarettes as a means to help users quit, but until science backs up that claim, Tobacco Free North Dakota cannot and will not endorse it.

NDQuits provides excellent (and free) services — both counseling and access to FDA-approved nicotine replacement therapy — to North Dakotans who wish to quit.

In addition, e-cigarettes are not regulated by the FDA as a tobacco product

and, therefore, are neither taxed as such nor have age restrictions placed on their sales. That does, in fact, mean your 10-year-old child or grandchild could legally purchase these devices.

Though we hope many retailers in our state would

deny their purchase based on morals, it's irresponsible not to have laws in place to prevent our kids from that kind of access.

Tobacco Free North Dakota is genuinely concerned about reports of e-cigarette explosions, studies that show youth use of e-cigarettes doubling in just one year and the knowledge that adolescents have found ways to alter these devices to smoke other drugs, like marijuana, without a detectable scent.

Tobacco Free North Dakota wants answers and commonsense protections put in place by both the FDA and our state policymakers, a goal we will be working toward leading up to the next state legislative session in 2015. In the meantime, we encourage the public to stay informed, proceed with caution and visit with your district legislators about any shared concerns you may have.

(Erin Hill-Oban is the executive director of Tobacco Free North Dakota.)