Flavored Cannabis Products: Lessons from Tobacco

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As required by the 2019 NACS Conference

I have signed a disclosure statement and note the following conflict/s of interest:

- None
These are tobacco products
Flavors are important to selling tobacco products

- Mask harsh taste
- Make it easier to inhale
- Popular and new
- Prolong “experimentation” increasing chance of addiction
Flavored cigarettes attract kids

- Prohibited in cigarettes and smokeless by 2009 Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act
  - Exempted menthol
Industry responded with flavored little cigars

- Unregulated
- Cheaper
- Flavored cigars about half of cigar sales (2015)
- FDA took jurisdiction in 2016
  - But hasn’t done anything
E-cigarettes

- Thousands of flavors
- 81% of 12-17 year olds who ever used e-cig used flavored e-cig the first time (PATH 2013-4)
- 82% said used e-cigs “because they come in flavors I like”
- Some inhaled flavors dangerous
- Young adults who use flavored e-cigs more likely to also use cannabis
Juul e-cigarettes

- Use nicotine salt
- Aggressive social media marketing
- 70% of youth market
- 74% of youth started with flavors
  - 28% fruit
  - 27% menthol/mint
- Claim just want adult switchers
- Philip Morris bought 35% stake
- Other companies copying technology
California high school students and young adults (2016)

- Participants felt ads for flavored e-liquids meant for those a little older
- Aspirational
- Ads for sweet flavors (i.e., desserts and fruits) seen as targeting those their age and younger
- Social desirability/conformity

Flavors keep youth and young adults using

- Past 30-day e-cigarette and other tobacco product users
- Would not use if product was not flavored
  - 84% of youth
  - 76% of young adults

National Regulation

- FDA took jurisdiction in 2016 with “deeming” rule over all tobacco products
- Obama blocked effort to restrict flavors in 2016
- Expressed alarm over explosion in youth e-cigarette use (promoted by flavors)
- Expressing concern but no meaningful regulation yet
Cities acting

- Chicago first
- San Francisco prohibited sale of all flavored tobacco products
  - Tobacco companies spent $12 million trying to overturn
  - 68% supported law
- Spreading
- What about cannabis?
Flavored cannabis products
Policy lessons from tobacco

- Prohibit flavors
- Plain packaging
- Strong graphic warning labels
- Restrictions on imitation packaging
  - partially implemented in CA for “images, characters, or phrases that are popularly used to advertise to children,” and for “candy packaging or labeling”
Thank You