



## **Press Release**

### **A Joint Call for Healthcare Professionals, Teachers, Parents, Young People and All Citizens to Urge the Government to Ban Electronic Cigarettes and Other New Tobacco Products Now!**

(Hong Kong, 19 June 2018) – Hong Kong Academy of Medicine (HKAM), Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine of The University of Hong Kong (HKU), Faculty of Medicine of The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) and The Hong Kong Medical Association (HKMA) held a joint press conference today urging the Government to impose a total ban on electronic cigarettes and other new tobacco products. The medical organisations and faculties stress the possible substantial harms on children and young people caused by new or unknown toxins from the products.

Advertising electronic cigarettes and new tobacco products as less harmful is attractive to children, adolescents and young people. These products have become increasingly popular in the United States and some European countries. They are gateways to cigarette smoking and a new generation of nicotine addicts is anticipated. Nicotine is harmful and other toxic substances from using these new products have been found. It is evident that there are side effects and it is only a matter of time that increasing harms from consuming these products will emerge and be discovered.

This joint force of medical parties opposes to allowing electronic cigarettes and new tobacco products into the market. The healthcare professionals expect there will be a new expanding epidemic of these new products on top of the expanding tobacco epidemic. Consumption of these new cigarette products will not effectively reduce harms but lead to additional adverse impacts such as delayed intention to quit cigarettes and unknown harms on young people from long-term use of these products which can be substantial and probably irreversible.

Professor C.S. Lau, President of HKAM, said, “Electronic cigarettes and all other new tobacco products are not without harm, but potentially causing multiple physical and psychological morbidity in people at all ages. We should not underestimate the long-term health impacts. The Academy and its 15 constituent specialty Colleges urge the Government to impose a total ban on these products.”

Professor Gabriel Leung, HKU’s Dean of Medicine emphasised that “when it comes to protecting the public’s health, there is no room for compromise. As doctors, it would be unconscionable for us to trade off the health and wellbeing of a generation of young people getting addicted to tobacco.”

Professor Francis Chan, Dean of CUHK’s Faculty of Medicine, said, “Cigarettes are always harmful to our health. We should not lower our guard because of their different names or forms. Doctors have the responsibility to safeguard public health, and must make it clear that these products are not something trendy nor fun. We will never give in.”

Dr. David Lam, Honorary Secretary of HKMA, considered that the protection of the public from harmful products formed an essential and integral part of public health policy. “Electronic



cigarettes and new tobacco products are harmful, carcinogenic, addictive and come with no health benefits at all. Once it becomes a habit of our youngsters, you cannot call a stop to it. Ban it today!”

The history of the expanding tobacco epidemic proved that it would take many decades to impose effective control when the use of an addictive product and addiction had been widespread in the population especially among young people. HKAM, medical faculties of HKU and CUHK, and HKMA believe that only a total ban on electronic cigarettes and new tobacco products will prevent children and young people from using the products and therefore minimise the health risks to the public in long term. They urge all healthcare professionals, teachers, parents, young people and all other citizens who care about the health of our children and young people to advocate for a total ban on electronic cigarettes and other new tobacco products. The sooner the ban, the more children and young people will be protected.

### Photo caption



(From left to right) Professor C.S. Lau, President of Hong Kong Academy of Medicine; Professor Gabriel Leung, HKU's Dean of Medicine; Professor Francis Chan, Dean of CUHK's Faculty of Medicine and Dr. David Lam, Honorary Secretary of The Hong Kong Medical Association were present at the joint press conference held today.



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