



**Consumers Helping
Others Improve
Their Condition by
Ending Smoking**

CHOICES NEWSLETTER - DECEMBER 2019

Volume 13 Issue 2

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Mysterious Vaping Illnesses Exceed 2,100 by Deidre Stenard

Public health officials have been working around the clock to identify the cause, or causes, of vaping illnesses that have resulted in hundreds of hospitalizations, including many in intensive care units requiring mechanical aid to breathe. The name of the vaping illness has been coined EVALI for E-Cigarette or Vaping product use-Associated Lung Injury. The Centers for Disease Control provided the breakdown of those who have gotten ill: 72% are male, 67% are ages 18 to 34, and 16% are age 18 or younger. Both the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have been working hard to find a cause for the outbreak of vaping illnesses recently. They have now identified Vitamin E Acetate, or Vitamin E Oil as a toxin of concern.



There have been 42 people who have died and over 2,100 who got sick as a result of vaping since June of 2019. continued on page 5

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) for Quitting Smoking

By Azeem Sitabkhan

Smoking is a learned addiction that provides positive short-term benefits — both psychological and biochemical. It is also the leading preventable cause of chronic illness. Once the behavior of smoking is established it is difficult to break because smokers learn that smoking is a quick, convenient way to feel good. Smoking can help you cope with uncomfortable emotions (like boredom or stress) or help you feel comfortable in social situations (like a party).

All this knowledge about smoking means that giving it up depends on breaking the automatic habits that links your wanting to smoke to continued on page 6

The Moving Forward Self-Help Center- New Brunswick

By Cleo Zifovski

The Moving Forward Self-Help Center on 25 Elizabeth St, New Brunswick, NJ is a place where adults with mental illness can gather in a warm, supportive and friendly atmosphere. The surroundings are designed to encourage consumers to realize a style of living centered on wellness and recovery. The power of a community to create health is far greater than any doctor, clinic or hospital. Thus, the center provides a safe space to support community mental health members through self help and mutual aid.

Self-help centers are intended to support mentally ill persons to become empowered. Operations are managed in a comfortable environment and self-help centers provide an environment of support where people can relax, feel respected and welcomed. "It is a great place to relax and make new friends." said one member. While another shared "The food was good and the music was fun." Often the Center has parties, events, presentations, or weekly groups for members to participate in.

Statistics say individuals with mental illness have an increased vulnerability to tobacco use, developing dependence, and experiencing difficulty quitting tobacco. CHOICES has a specialized approach to reaching this population. CHOICES is a program for smokers with mental illness in New Jersey. The goal is to increase awareness while addressing tobacco use therapeutically. CHOICES aims to create a strong peer support network that encourages people to make a positive healthy lifestyle change. We look forward to presenting at the Moving Forward Self-Help Center in the near future.

The Moving Forward Self-Help Center is open 7 days per week and is handicap accessible. Please call the center for further details at 732-317- 2920.

Menthol Makes Cigarettes Easy to Smoke and Harder to Quit

By Lisa Evans

If you are African American and you smoke cigarettes, you most likely smoke a menthol cigarette. Studies show that more than 86% of African Americans smokers smoke menthol cigarettes. The opposite is true of Caucasians. About 28% of Caucasian smokers smoke menthol cigarettes and the Hispanic and Asian communities smoke menthols at rate 37% and 38% respectively. Should these statistics matter to you? They should.

If you or anyone you know smokes menthol cigarettes, these statistics should matter



very much. Each percentage point of whichever population you are thinking of, represents people. Real people. Smokers. Our friends and family. Black and white, all colors. People who try hard and find it almost impossible to quit, people who get seriously ill and people who die, possibly sooner than other people who happen to smoke non-menthol cigarettes. While all cigarettes are bad for your health, menthol cigarettes are exceptionally bad. Why? The Truth Initiative answers this question best, "Menthol makes cigarettes easy to smoke and harder to quit."

Menthol is a chemical compound extracted from mint plants. It has cooling effects on the mouth and throat. Menthol is added to cough drops, toothpaste and other products used in the oral cavity. Cigarette manufacturers found that menthol reduces the harshness of cigarette smoke and suppresses the coughing reflex. Continued on page 6

CHOICES Receives Two Letters of Appreciation

From a Program

“It is always so wonderful to welcome the CHOICES team to West Bergen Healthcare. Our consumers so enjoyed hearing their inspirational stories. The next day, the consumers shared that they often think of Deidre and Azeem and the coping skills they used to quit smoking. They too want to tell their family and friends that they quit smoking!



Once again, we at West Bergen Mental Healthcare thank CHOICES for your continued inspiration and motivation. To show our appreciation, our consumers would like you to enjoy the thank you cards they wrote.”

- Frances L. Picone, MA, LPC, LDADC, ACS, Partial Care Director

From a Consumer

Dear CHOICES,

Keep up the good work!

In October 2006, my son Anthony and his two friends Big “D” R. and Steven H. all died in a car wreck at about 2:00 am on Route 66 in Oklahoma after succumbing to the urge to drive to town to buy cigarettes. My son had given up smoking for ten days before the urge got to him.

If only we had known about CHOICES. When you come to West Bergen Mental Healthcare, I listen so intently. My son was seventeen at the time of his death. One friend in the car who escaped death was also seventeen. The other two friends were deceased were twenty years old.

The other seventeen year old--Jeff L. had just begun to smoke and he continued to smoke heavily.

I am in favor of and support changing the smoking age to twenty one and in fact, banning all cigarettes in general!

If we knew about CHOICES my son and his friends (who died coming home to my house from buying cigarettes), might still be alive and have kicked the habit and not succumbed to the urges.

Anthony would be thirty and we could have had a happy ending.

I fully support Federal funding for CHOICES as would Anthony if he was alive. His effort to stop smoking for 10 days should not go unnoticed. CHOICES give them heck and I'll proudly wear your t-shirt and support you with my local politicians.

Thank you,
Irene C.
West Bergen Healthcare

Stop Smoking Resource Center



Thinking about quitting?

We are conducting a research study designed to help smokers with schizophrenia and schizoaffective disorder to quit smoking.

If you are an adult smoker between the ages of 18-70, you may qualify to participate in this study.

We provide counseling, nicotine patches, and payments up to \$100 over 4 months

For more information, call Marc Steinberg, PhD at **732-235-4600**



By Trish Dooley Budsock

On Thursday, November 21, Dr Williams, along with Deidre Stenard and myself were invited to present a webinar entitled: NAMI's Ask the Expert Webinar: With CHOICES and Support, You Can Quit Smoking. It was a national webinar, with people calling in from all over the country. Dr. Williams discussed topics including prevalence of tobacco use among mental health consumers, as well as treatments that are available, and Deidre and I described the work that the CHOICES team has been doing since 2005. Deidre also shared her story of smoking and quitting success, which seemed to be very inspirational to the audience.

It was an honor to present to this national audience, and several states are interested in developing their own CHOICES approach locally. This webinar was scheduled as an activity to celebrate the Great American Smokeout, and at CHOICES we know that can be any day of the year! You can click this link to view and listen to our webinar here:

<https://nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-s-Ask-the-Expert/2019/NAMI-s-Ask-the-Expert-Webinar-With-CHOICES-and-Support-You-Can-Quit-Smoking>

Tobacco - Free for a Healthy New Jersey

By Lisa Evans

New Jersey residents now have access to 11 Quit Centers funded by the New Jersey Department of Health, Office of Tobacco Free, Nutrition & Fitness, New Jersey. The centers are located in Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland/Salem, Hudson, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth Ocean, Essex, Passaic, and Union.

Services are free, and once enrolled, smokers may qualify for free Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) products as part of their treatment plan. For more information, please visit their website:

<https://www.tobaccofreenj.com/quit-smoking>



Vaping Illnesses continued from page 1

So far, the patients have a few things in common, according to the CDC. They suffered from respiratory symptoms, including coughing, shortness of breath, chest pain, and difficulty breathing. Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, abdominal pain, fever, and weight loss were also common symptoms (Beluz, vox.com, 2019). These symptoms can worsen into what resembles a rare-type pneumonia and possibly death. Doctors said that one patient's lungs looked like they've suffered a chemical burn from harmful chemicals. The deaths are a wake-up call to those that still vape. Public health officials expect more deaths due to the condition of some of the patients.

CDC officials said patients have reported using THC, THC and nicotine, and for some, just nicotine. Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is the principal psychoactive ingredient in marijuana and people are frequently vaping it. The FDA has issued a warning to stop vaping THC products because so far, most of the illnesses seem to be coming from THC products that people have gotten off of the street. Vitamin E Acetate, or Vitamin E Oil has been the common denominator in all of the tissue samples that they have tested. Vitamin E Acetate is dangerous when inhaled because it forms a very sticky substance in the lungs. This breakthrough is the earliest statement of fact from the CDC since testing began. Vitamin E Acetate is present in THC from informal sources. They've also said that more testing and studying needs to be done to pinpoint exactly where the Vitamin E Acetate is coming from and how to contain the chemical from doing more damage to people. The CDC has said that to be safe for the time being, people should not vape anything at all.

One newspaper reported that there have been patients who have recovered to a degree to get



CDC, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), state and local health departments, and other clinical and public health partners are investigating a multistate outbreak of e-cigarette, or vaping, product use associated lung injury (EVALI). (CDC website)

out of the hospital, sometimes after only 6 days. However, one patient reports adverse health effects from her vaping illness lingering on. Doing laundry, going up and down the stairs, and even talking can cause her to be short of breath (Kent, The Trenton Times, 2019). Some patients have had to be readmitted to the hospital.

There are a huge number of people working on this investigation--more than 80 people at the CDC are working on the issue and more at a FDA lab in Cincinnati working with at least 150 samples from patients who got sick (Kaplan, New York Times, 2019). There is an urgency to get answers as quickly as possible. But, of course, we want accurate results. The CDC's statement about Vitamin E Acetate or oil is the first breakthrough since they started studying the illness and we can be hopeful that they will come forth with more information as the situation develops.

Are you a consumer and interested in learning more about tobacco dependence or smoking cessation?

Visit our website:

www.njchoices.org

CBT for Quitting Continued from page 1

to your everyday routine (like after eating, talking on the phone, watching TV, drinking coffee) and finding other ways to get the psychological benefits of smoking.

The good news is that since cigarette smoking is a learned behavior, it can be unlearned. New behaviors and coping skills can be substituted so that you can live a satisfying life, but without the health-damaging effects of tobacco products.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a type of psychological treatment that is based firmly on research findings and usually focuses more on the current situation and its solution, rather than the past. It concentrates on a person's views and beliefs about their life, not on their personality traits. CBT works by identifying and changing maladaptive thoughts, emotions, and behaviors that trigger, worsen, and/or maintain a range of problems (such as depression, anxiety, addiction, etc.). Because changing your smoking-related behaviors – and restructuring your thoughts related to smoking urges – is essential to quitting, CBT can effectively be applied to smoking cessation.

Some CBT-oriented techniques that can help someone cope with smoking urges are:

1. Restructuring your thinking patterns related to smoking (for example, challenging the belief that smoking is the only activity that relieves stress).
2. Identifying ways to stay busy (boredom is a common trigger to smoke).
3. Increasing physical activity (exercise has been shown to reduce smoking urges and to reduce weight gain associated with quitting).

4. Managing negative mood states (stress and other negative mood states increase smoking urges).
5. Coming up with alternate activities to keep your hands and mouth active (for example, eating healthy snacks, chewing gum, holding a pen).
6. Relaxation training using breathing-based methods and muscle relaxation techniques.

Harte, C. (2019). *Kicking the Habit for Good: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Smoking Cessation*.

Menthol Continued from page 2

The Truth Initiative reports on their website (www.truthinitiative.com) that menthol smokers have greater difficulty quitting and are far less successful



than non-menthol quitters. The Truth Initiative also states “Adult menthol smokers report taking less time to have their first cigarette after waking than non-menthol smokers.” Time to first cigarette (how long after waking until smoking first cigarette) is an indicator of how addicted a smoker is, their chances of successfully quitting, and can be a risk factor in certain factor in certain smoking-related illnesses.

Menthol smokers should consider quitting menthol cigarettes. By quitting menthol cigarettes, smokers will not eliminate their risk of smoking related illnesses but their exposure to smoke will decrease and they may become less addicted to nicotine. Being less addicted to nicotine improves the smoker's chance of successfully quitting cigarettes for good. This pertains to all African Americans, Caucasians, Asians and Hispanics menthol smokers. You do not have to be a statistic...quit smoking menthol cigarettes!

<https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/traditional-tobacco-products/menthol-facts-stats-and-regulations>



Creatively Inclined

CHOICES is proud of our peers who are creatively inclined in the arts, poetry, and writing. Are you an artist, poet, or writer and want to see your work in print? We would love to share your artwork, poem, or story! Please contact us via email at dooleypc@rutgers.edu.

“I am a CHOICES volunteer and have recently attended several site visits with the CHOICES team. Site visits can be informative and challenging. They refine social skills and deliver a great deal of satisfaction and gratification for both the client and the clinician who eventually attempts to rectify the immense burden of smoking. All of the site visits I attended thus far (about 6) have proven to be pleasantly gratifying. Most of the consumers have been very cooperative and participate when called upon. It’s gratifying to see smokers take charge of their lives and work toward healthier lifestyles.

At first, quitting smoking seems like an insurmountable task, only the clients who are serious and persevere will eventually reap the benefits of a smoke-free life. One of these great benefits derived from this work environment are the people you will work with. I respect all of my colleagues. They are knowledgeable in their craft, the content of their occupation, and the delivery of their presentations. Also, all of them are extremely affable. They encourage me to get involved in my work and develop confidence to become successful on the job.

In conclusion, I’d like to thank the staff of CHOICES, specifically Trish Dooley Budsock and Dr. Jill Williams for having enough faith in me to perform my job, the most essential part of which is the site visit. I thank them for giving me this opportunity to submit this article for publication.” -Terrance H

Don't Die

**Inside out are the ills from
smoking
A lot of people are constantly
choking
What is on the outside of you?
But whats really bad inside you?
To lose an organ like a lung
To think that its really fun
When all you're doing
Is very quickly being buried
In a quiet plot in some cemetery
So please talk to a friend
And don't hurry for your
lives end!**

By Karen C



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The CHOICES team will come to you! The **CHOICES** team of peer advocates will visit your group or program in New Jersey and provide mental health consumers with education about the consequences of smoking and tobacco products along with information regarding treatment resources available to make quitting easier. Call us at 732-235-8232 to set up a date and time.



CHOICES is a partnership between Rutgers-RWJMS Division of Addiction Psychiatry, the Mental Health Association of New Jersey (MHANJ) and the NJ Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services and funded by the NJ Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services .