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Dear Dr Southern

**Re: Feedback on the draft *Supporting Smoking Cessation Guide for Health Professionals***

The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft ***Supporting Smoking Cessation Guide for Health Professionals***.

ACN has carefully reviewed and supports the guideline that include the GRADE approach (Grading of Recommendations, Assessment, Development and Evaluation) to ensure the success in smoking cessation. This well-developed and most comprehensive guideline would enable health professionals and the wider primary care setting to support people wishing to quit smoking.

The clinical questions and most of the 16 recommendations are suitable. All essential aspects related to making structured recommendations are taken into account. ACN particularly agrees with the first four of the recommendations that show a significant role of health professionals and clinicians in the process of smoking cessation. They provide advice, consultations, appointments and follow up to those who indicate willingness to smoking cessation. Keeping the lines of communication open and engaging means more support for motivated smokers to quit. The frequency of the consultations should be patient specific and discussed in an agreeable health coaching approach.

ACN supports the establishment of a system for identifying smokers and documenting their tobacco use in every practice or healthcare service. This data should be digitally recorded as part of patients' electronic medical record that will guide health care practitioners on drug interactions when prescribing medications for smoking cessation. It will be valuable to have a universal approach in smoking cessation system that can be implemented nationally with same core guidelines or process.

ACN consulted across our fellows and members and provides the following feedback on some of the recommendations below:

**Pharmacotherapy for smoking cessation**

ACN suggests the recommendations explain that clinicians should check the patient's health and make sure there is no heart or cardiovascular problems before suggesting taking nicotine replacement therapy (NRT). Patients should be clearly informed about side effects of NRT, patch, varenicline, bupropion, nortriptyline, or other pharmacotherapy medications for smoking cessation. Each of these medications has side effects. Extra cautions should be given to pregnant women who are willing to quit smoking. Therefore, the assistance of health practitioners in guiding the smoking cessation process is important to monitor the effectiveness of the medication and the side effects.

To ensure the involvement of clinicians in monitoring the progress, both patients and clinicians should demonstrate their commitment to have ongoing consultations and counselling. It might be helpful to set up long term appointments in advance to ensure the clinicians' assistance during the process as they could advise the combination of treatments. The GRADE approach used in this guideline has proved the efficacy of treatment combination for effective smoking cessation.

### **The use of electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes)**

Considering the lack of tested and standardised regulation on e-cigarettes amongst states and territories in Australia<sup>1</sup>, ACN suggests to carefully reconsider the use of e-cigarettes as a recommendation in smoking cessation. E-cigarettes currently have not been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) for safety, quality and efficacy, even though the products deliver substances to the lung<sup>2</sup>. The health effects of e-cigarette use are currently unknown and should be subject to proper evaluation.

Most products involving inhaling chemicals into the lungs have to go through a comprehensive testing process to prove they are safe and effective. This could be a significant risk to consumers, who may be under the false impression that electronic cigarettes available for sale have been proven safe to use<sup>3</sup>. Non-nicotine e-cigarettes have potentially high appeal and can be lawfully sold to young people, despite the health and social impacts remaining unknown.

In conclusion, ACN considers the Supporting Smoking Cessation Guide to be valuable for health professionals who have been dealing with how to help patients to quit smoking but they often fail. Yet, ACN is concerned by the recommendation to promote the use of e-cigarettes which could lead to increasing rates of smoking and further risk to health. The efficacy of e-cigarettes as a cessation aid has not been fully established. There is an urgent need for research on the health effects of e-cigarettes and their use in quitting smoking.

ACN is the pre-eminent and national leader of the nursing profession. We are committed to our intent of advancing nurse leadership to enhance health care and strongly believe that all nurses, regardless of their job title or level of seniority, are leaders.

Please contact ACN's Policy and Advocacy Manager, Dr Carolyn Stapleton, at [carolyn.stapleton@acn.edu.au](mailto:carolyn.stapleton@acn.edu.au) if you have any questions or would like further information.

Yours sincerely



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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/e-cigarette>

<sup>2</sup> [https://wiki.cancer.org.au/policy/Position\\_statement\\_-\\_Electronic\\_cigarettes](https://wiki.cancer.org.au/policy/Position_statement_-_Electronic_cigarettes)

<sup>3</sup> Fraser, D, Weier, M, Keane, H & Gartnera, C, 2015, "Vapers' perspectives on electronic cigarette regulation in Australia", International Journal of Drug Policy, Volume 26, Issue 6, June 2015, Pages 589-594, <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2015.01.019>>

