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Depending on Brand of “Juice” E-Cigarettes Pose Risks

CEDARVILLE, OHIO – According to a 2015 study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, electronic cigarettes have surpassed traditional cigarettes as the most commonly used tobacco product among high school students.

A group of four students at Cedarville University began researching the chemical compounds in two brands of e-cigarette flavoring in January to see if they contain harmful ingredients. A previous study at Marquette University found that e-cigarette flavorings, commonly called “juice,” contain harmful ingredients such as diacetyl and 2,3-pentanedione—both have been linked to lung disease.

Seniors Stephen Carnegis (Beavercreek, Ohio), Kevin Haffey (Walkersville, Maryland), Alison Hunter (Auburn, New York) and Logan Mauk (Bellbrook, Ohio), conducted the research. Their project was coordinated by Nathan Hnatiuk, Ph.D., associate professor of chemistry.

The group studied four samples of flavorings, three from the NicQuid brand and one from Ruthless E-Juice. When testing the samples, the group found propylene glycol, used as a base for the flavorings, nicotine and a variety of different esters and aromatics used for flavoring.

“Other than nicotine, the students found ingredients that are pretty common in a lot of things we might eat or drink,” said Hnatiuk. “Ingesting a lot of these ingredients is totally safe, but inhaling them is really an unknown at this point.”

Hnatiuk also says that because the U.S. Food and Drug Administration didn’t regulate the production and sale of e-cigarette flavorings until just recently, there’s no telling what could be in products that are already on the market.

It wasn’t until May 5, 2016, that the FDA announced it would begin to regulate e-cigarettes, a decision that had been pending for more than a year.

“We didn’t find the harmful ingredients that some other studies have, but we also tested different brands than those studies, and each brand can be created with entirely different things,” said Hnatiuk.

One interesting discovery was that one flavor of NicQuid, called “Daybreak,” contained less nicotine than was advertised. According to the label, the flavoring contained six milligrams per milliliter, but students found the actual number was just 4.6 mg/ml.

“That’s the real danger to the consumer. Because there’s product out there that came before regulations were in place, it’s really impossible to tell what chemicals might be in those bottle.”

In addition to finding out more about e-cigarettes, students were also able to gain valuable experience with state-of-the-art equipment in Cedarville’s newly renovated lab space.

“This study gave me great experience using lab equipment that was very new to me,” said Carnegis. “I hadn’t ever worked with equipment that used a computer to identify chemical compounds, so this was a great learning experience.”

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 3,711 undergraduate, graduate and online students in more than 100 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings and leading student satisfaction ratings. For more information about the University, visit www.cedarville.edu.