The benefits of e-cigarettes outweigh their potential harms the British Royal College of Physicians concluded after a comprehensive review of the current scientific research on e-cigarettes. The college's April 28 report, reported in Britain by the BBC [2] and in the U.S. by the New York Times [3], concludes e-cigarettes are "much safer" than smoking conventional cigarettes and can be an important aid to quit smoking.

“This is the first genuinely new way of helping people stop smoking that has come along in decades,” said John Britton (in the New York Times [3]), director of the U.K. Center for Tobacco and Alcohol Studies at the University of Nottingham, who led the committee that produced the report. He continued on to say that e-cigarettes could help half of smokers get off cigarettes.

Many in American public health community are likely to reject the British group’s conclusion, although harm reduction is a theme in many public health policies, such as needle exchange programs for drug users. CDC told the NY Times it would not comment and repeated its position against e-cigarettes as a safe and effective cessation tool.

According to the CDC [4], in 2015 cigarette smoking was responsible for more than 480,000 deaths per year in the United States, including nearly 42,000 deaths resulting from secondhand smoke exposure. Smokers, on average, die ten years earlier than those who don't smoke cigarettes.

The Royal College of Physicians put out a report in 1962 that foreshadowed the 1964 U.S. Surgeon General’s report that linked smoking and cancer.