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News

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For Immediate Release

STS Criticizes Dialed-Back E-Cig Flavor Ban

Current FDA plan falls short, failing to clear the market of all flavored e-cigarettes

CHICAGO (January 3, 2020) — The Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) is deeply disappointed that a proposed rule authorizing a nationwide ban of flavored electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) did not include menthol. The Society believes that the US Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) omission carries risks and continues to threaten public health.

"Flavored e-cigarettes have hooked a new generation of kids on nicotine," said Keith S. Naunheim, MD, STS past president and a general thoracic surgeon from Saint Louis who treats lung cancer patients. "The epidemic requires bold leadership and drastic action. Instead, the FDA carved out an exemption for menthol, a popular flavor among children and teenagers, for which there is no public health justification. One could reasonably conclude that the FDA has prioritized the interests of the tobacco industry over those of our children. It's time to ban ALL flavors."

The Society [strongly endorsed](#) a Trump Administration plan to remove all non-tobacco flavored e-cigarettes from the market, including menthol, when the plan was announced on September 11, 2019. A full flavor ban would help dramatically reverse the skyrocketing levels of underage e-cigarette use.

Studies have shown that flavors attract young people to use these addictive products, and if any e-cigarette flavors are left on the market, kids are expected to migrate to them. Recent research shows that youth use of mint and menthol e-cigarettes soared after Juul restricted the availability of other flavors, like mango, in November 2018. In addition, more than half of current youth smokers use menthol cigarettes, according to the 2019 National Youth Tobacco Survey.

STS remains fully committed to patient safety and strongly urges the Administration to implement its original plan to clear the market of all flavored e-cigarettes, including menthol.

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Note: Dr. Naunheim is the Vallee L. and Melba Willman Professor and Chief of Cardiothoracic Surgery at the Saint Louis University Medical Center.

Founded in 1964, The Society of Thoracic Surgeons is a not-for-profit organization representing more than 7,500 cardiothoracic surgeons, researchers, and allied health care professionals worldwide who are dedicated to ensuring the best possible outcomes for surgeries of the heart, lung, and esophagus, as well as other surgical procedures within the chest. The Society's mission is to enhance the ability of cardiothoracic surgeons to provide the highest quality patient care through education, research, and advocacy.