A Snapshot of Global Policies to Regulate E-cigarette Pack Warnings

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Background

- Pack warnings, if designed appropriately, effectively convey health effects and risks associated with tobacco products
- Just as countries require health warning labels (HWLs) for cigarettes and smokeless tobacco, they may also consider HWLs for e-cigarettes
- This study examines policies that countries have enacted regarding pack warnings for e-cigarettes

Methods

- National policies regulating e-cigarettes were identified primarily through media monitoring, and direct contact with representatives of Ministries of Health or tobacco control experts in approximately 130 countries
- Copies of written policies were reviewed and those related to health warning labels (HWLs) were identified
- Policy summaries and classifications were verified by in-country experts including Ministry of Health staff
- Countries were stratified by World Bank 2018 income levels and WHO regions

Results

- Ninety-eight countries have a national policy on e-cigarettes
- Thirty-eight countries have HWL policies: 32 high-income; five middle-income countries; and one low-income country
- Most countries with HWL policies for e-cigarette products are in the WHO EURO region (n=33), with policies in accordance with the European Commission regulation on classification, labeling and packaging of substances and mixtures (CLP), as well as the European Union Tobacco Products Directive (TPD) 2014
- The TPD HWL provisions stipulate that e-liquid and e-cigarette packs should contain a warning about nicotine content, addictiveness, and unsuitability for non-smokers. Warning text should be in the official language of member states; occupy 30% of each of the two biggest packaging surfaces; and be centralized. Promotional or misleading elements on packs are prohibited. Child-resistant packaging and/or tactile warnings for hazardous substances and mixtures are required.

HWL e-cigarette policies for non-EU countries

COUNTRY	Health Warning Label Policy
Canada	Warnings are currently under development. Warning should contain information on emissions, health hazards, and health effects
Georgia*	Warnings must be in Georgian or both Georgian and another language (e.g., English). Text warnings include "smoke kills", "smokers die earlier", "smoking can cause serious harm to you and those around you." Approved pictorial warnings must also be included on back of packaging. Inserts should contain one of the following warnings: "This product is harmful to your health" "These products contain nicotine, which a highly addictive substance", "The use of these products is not recommended for young people or non-smokers", or "These products are not approved substitutes for tobacco"
Maldives	Five approved text warnings to be rotated on 30% of front and back of packaging. They are: "Tobacco paves the way for cancer", "Tobacco blocks the arteries and leads to heart attack", "Tobacco contains several chemicals that are harmful to health", "Smokers are more prone to have abnormal babies", and "Those exposed to secondhand smoke are also prone to dangerous health effects"
Moldova*	See EU warning. Although not a member of the EU, Moldova aligns policy with the EU
New Zealand	Must comply with packaging for tobacco products as much as possible. E-cigarette-specific regulations are under development.
Republic of Korea	Text warnings indicating they contain harmful substances such as TSNAs, formaldehyde, etc.
Tajikistan*	Pictorial warning for tobacco products; 75% of front and back; information on carcinogenic substances, etc. not less than 17% of side of packaging; ban on use of misleading descriptors
United States	Separate warning for e-cigarettes with and without nicotine: "This product contains nicotine. Nicotine is an addictive chemical" for nicotine-containing e-cigarettes; and "This product is made from tobacco" for non-nicotine e-cigarettes

* European country not under EU

TPD/CLP requirements for labeling

This product contains Nicotine which is a highly addictive substance

This product contains Nicotine which is a highly addictive substance

TPD/CLP requirements on e-liquid and pack

THIS PRODUCT CONTAINS NICOTINE WHICH IS A HIGHLY ADDICTIVE SUBSTANCE

Conclusions

- Most countries adopting pack warnings for e-cigarettes are high-income and from the European region
- The content of health warning labels for e-cigarettes is still being developed in some jurisdictions
- For jurisdictions with required content for labels, many include information about the constituents of the product including nicotine, and some link nicotine to addiction