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# You have been QUALIFIED for a smokeless e-cig starter kit

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Shortly after the shock of seeing e-cigarette advertising on television, an unsolicited e-mail arrived promoting an 'e-cig starter kit' (figure 1). This showed 'Megan' (attractive, slim, elegant, professional, confident and happy) 'smoking' an e-cigarette, apparently on a plane. Incongruously, the e-cigarette billows smoke. The sender's address and titles of embedded links suggest the ease of trying e-cigarettes, and that e-cigarettes are healthy and inoffensive. Ingeniously, the advert can be read as showing that holding a cigarette object is attractive and socially desirable, *and* that e-cigarettes are (somewhat) distinct from 'ordinary' cigarettes.

Emerging research raises concerns over whether e-cigarettes renormalise and reglamourise smoking and/or act as a gateway to smoking.<sup>1 2</sup> Within present legislation, 'Megan' can 'smoke' her e-cigarette in public spaces because e-cigarettes are not subject to smoke-free regulation. They can also be advertised, although some may question whether a *smoking* e-cigarette complies with guidelines.

In 2013, US Democratic Congress members wrote to e-cigarette manufacturers regarding marketing tactics likely to 'hook' young people,<sup>3</sup> and posted a presentation highlighting parallels with earlier cigarette marketing.<sup>4</sup> As gender and health researchers, we also note the strong resemblance to images of women in advertising which so

successfully drew earlier generations of women to smoking.<sup>5-7</sup>

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Subject: You have been QUALIFIED for a smokeless e cig starter kit

Date: Thu, 16 Jan 2014 02:51:28 -0500

From: Congratulations <Congratulations@mvmfndhelp.com>

To: <k.hunt@msoc.mrc.gla.ac.uk>

[Electronic Cigarette Free Trial](#) | [The Healthy Smoker's Choice: No Carbon Monoxide, Ash or Bad Smell!](#)



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Figure 1 Screenshot of unsolicited email.