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

Kate Hunt,¹ Helen Sweeting²

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.^{1 2} 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,³ and posted a presentation highlighting parallels with earlier cigarette marketing.⁴ 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.⁵⁻⁷

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Competing interests None.

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- 3 Mike Mitka M. Marketing tactics of e-cigarette manufacturers questioned. *JAMA* 2013;310:1912.
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- 5 Amos A. *Putting women in the picture: cigarette advertising policy and coverage of smoking and health in women's magazines in Europe*. London: BMA, 1992.
- 6 Elliot R. *Women and smoking since 1890*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2008.
- 7 Hunt K, Hannah MK, West P. Contextualising smoking: masculinity, femininity and class differences in smoking in men and women from three generations in the west of Scotland. *Health Educ Res Theory Pract* 2004;19:239-49.

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

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

From: Congratulations <Congratulations@myfindhelp.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.