

# Tobacco Harm Reduction: Knowledge and Sentiment Among Canadian Pharmacists

Category: Oral Presentation

## Abstract Body

### Tobacco Harm Reduction: Knowledge and Sentiment Among Canadian Pharmacists

Tobacco harm reduction (THR) is a public health strategy to reduce the harm caused by tobacco use. It aims to provide alternative products to traditional tobacco use that are less harmful by encouraging smokers to quit tobacco use altogether or switch. Smoking is the leading preventable cause of morbidity and mortality in Canada . 48,000 Canadians die annually from tobacco-related disease . 2020 smoking prevalence was 10.3% (3.2 million people) . Canada’s Tobacco Strategy (CTS) has set a target of “less than 5% tobacco use by 2035.” Health care providers should ask patients about smoking and provide them with advice and resources to help them quit, includes counselling, medications, and less harmful products such as e-cigarettes. According to a 2019 survey , Canadian physicians are ill prepared when it comes to discussing alternatives available to help smokers quit. Only 25% of physicians surveyed recommended e-cigarettes even though 63% believed them to be less harmful than cigarettes. A systematic review in the UK found that 42% of community pharmacists did not believe e-cigarettes could be used for smoking cessation. They concluded that further regulation, guidelines, and training are needed for pharmacists to support users of e-cigarettes within their community to quit smoking. Given the importance of tobacco harm reduction, we set out to measure pharmacists’ awareness and beliefs on this topic. From Oct. 3-Nov.1 2022, business intelligence publishing and research company, EnsembleIQ, collected survey responses (n=381) from community & hospital pharmacists across Canada. Pharmacists were asked about professional information sources, public health, harm reduction, and reduced risk products. Results: 4 in 10 were aware of tobacco harm reduction approaches. 70% claimed to be somewhat familiar with cigarette alternatives, but only 8% chose “switch to e-cigarettes” as an effective strategy to lower smoking rates. 25% misidentified the primary cause of smoking-related disease. 3 in 4 agreed smoke-free alternatives can reduce harm to society. 91% indicated they wanted to learn more about THR. Surveys like this will help to identify opportunities for Canadian researchers and stakeholders to explore effective ways to help Canadians quit smoking. Through educational initiatives, pharmacist awareness & knowledge of THR will increase their confidence to incorporate it into practice.

## Key Words

- Education
- Prevention/Harm Reduction
- Substance Use Disorder (general)
- Tobacco/Nicotine
- Vaping

#### Learning Objective # 1

1. Describe tobacco harm reduction as a public health strategy and how it fits into Canada's Tobacco Strategy.

#### Learning Objective # 2

2. Articulate key points about Canadian pharmacists' knowledge and sentiment towards tobacco harm reduction and reduced risk nicotine products.

#### Reference # 1

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/healthy-living/canada-tobacco-strategy.html>

#### Reference # 2

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1179173X211016867>

---

#### **Lead Author**

Mr. Brian Carter

CEO and Lead Consultant | Apotheco Inc.