A descriptive study of the behavior, beliefs and use of electronic cigarettes among a sample of college students with asthma.

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Background
Electronic Cigarettes are ubiquitous in the US. Increasing evidence suggests that these devices are not merely water vapor, but have constituents that when heated produce carcinogens. A lack of educational information on these devices has resulted in increased usage to those who have never been former smokers.

Methods
This research study was a cross sectional online survey administered at one university in Florida. The survey was sent to all undergraduate and graduate students. The survey data explored students who had reported being diagnosed by a doctor with asthma. This data was partitioned and analyzed to better understand if electronic cigarettes were of concern with students with asthma. Our research questions were to understand the behavior and use of electronic cigarettes among college students.

Results
Of the 827 total sample, some of the descriptive results indicated that 19% (n=157) of the participants have been diagnosed with asthma. Of those with an asthma diagnosis, 49% indicated having ever used (even one or two puffs) of an electronic cigarette. Top influencers were friends (55%) and primary site of smoking was at home (25%). Nearly half of individuals with asthma did not use the product every day. Results also indicated that of those individuals with asthma, 47.8% perceived electronic devices as less harmful than cigarettes. Negative symptoms included coughing and throat irritation. Primary reasons for use included “no particular reason” and “healthy alternative”.

Conclusion
The perception of electronic devices as being safe devices has propelled their usage even among those with underlying respiratory conditions. Programs and interventions should be focused on educating college students, and in particular those with asthma.
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