

Saint-Justine expert contributes to important guidelines for clinicians to address youth vaping



MONTREAL, December 19, 2019 – Clinicians of all disciplines are being asked to address the pressing issue of youth vaping with adolescents, families and community members, despite minimal youth-focused screening or treatment guidelines. CHU Sainte-Justine’s **Dr. Nicholas Chadi** is part of a small team of physicians who have developed a set of recommendations that provide important insights about how clinicians can best screen, counsel and treat youth for vaping.

Published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*, the recommendations by Boston Medical Center and the University of Montreal clinicians were created based on existing resources for nicotine dependence. Well-studied models used for screening youth for tobacco use, including tools such as Screening to Brief Intervention (S2BI) and the Brief Screener for Tobacco, Alcohol, and other Drugs (BSTAD) can be adapted to inquire about e-cigarettes and other vaping products.

Given how quickly vaping products are evolving, the guidelines emphasize the importance for providers to speak with their patients using youth-friendly terminology when asking them about vaping (using terms like pods, mods, vapes and vape pens – and not simply “e-cigarettes”). It is also important to ask about the products that youth are using (brands like “JUUL” and “STLTH” are known to contain a high concentration of nicotine), where they were purchased (illicit products have a higher risk of associated health risks), and what substances are in the product (nicotine, tetrahydrocannabinol [THC], and/or flavoring). This is especially important given a new harm attributed to vaping, seizures, which is described in the same issue of the *Journal of Adolescent Health*.

“Adolescents with a still-developing brain are particularly susceptible to the effects of vaping”, said Dr. Chadi, senior author of the JAH paper. “The high nicotine and THC concentration found in most of these vaping products exposes teens to several short and long-term effects that can have

a significant effect on brain development, let alone how vaping and addiction to these products can interfere with everyday school and family life.”

The commentary highlights a five-step algorithm that is suggested for counselling youth on their substance use. Clinicians should be routinely asking all youth if they vape, advise them to quit, assess their motivations and readiness to quit, assist their cessation effort, and arrange for ongoing follow-up.

The guidelines recommend that nicotine replacement therapies can be included in a comprehensive vaping cessation plan that should be created with and for the patient. Medications for nicotine cravings and withdrawal have typically been underused in youth, despite the fact that nicotine replacement therapy is encouraged by national pediatric societies like the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Canadian Paediatric Society for adolescents under 18 years old who are regular nicotine users. Unfortunately, there are currently no medications with established efficacy for managing cannabis withdrawal among youth who vape.

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CHU Sainte-Justine Research Center is a leading mother-child research institution affiliated with Université de Montréal. It brings together more than 210 research investigators, including over 90 clinician-scientists, as well as 450 graduate and postgraduate students focused on finding innovative prevention means, faster and less invasive treatments, as well as personalized approaches to medicine. The Center is part of Sainte-Justine University Hospital Centre, which is the largest mother-child center in Canada and second pediatric center in North America. More on research.chusj.org

ABOUT CHU SAINTE-JUSTINE

The Sainte-Justine university hospital centre (CHU Sainte-Justine) is the largest mother-child centre in Canada. A member of the Université de Montréal extended network of excellence in health (RUIS), Sainte-Justine

has 5,457 employees, including 1,532 nurses and nursing assistants; 1,000 other healthcare professionals; 520 physicians, dentists and pharmacists; 822 residents; and more than 200 researchers, 411 volunteers and 4,416 interns and students in a wide range of disciplines. Sainte-Justine has 484 beds, including 67 at the Centre de réadaptation Marie Enfant, the only exclusively pediatric rehabilitation centre in Quebec. The World Health Organization has recognized CHU Sainte-Justine as a "health promoting hospital". www.chusj.org

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