Opinions and Attitudes of Vermont School Principals and Nurses on Youth Vaping (2019)
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Background
A rapidly emerging new trend that is turning into a nationwide epidemic for youth in the United States is the use of electronic vapor products also known as “e-cigs”, “e-hookahs”, “vapes”, “mods”, and “JUULS”. There is little known about the long-term health effects of prolonged use of vapes. The rise in vape products sales and use, poses a public health threat to adolescents.

Methods
• An electronic survey with 24 quantitative, qualitative, and open-ended questions was developed and disseminated to VT school principals and nurses using UVM REDCap.
• Survey was emailed to 309 VT K-12 schools, public and private, which consisted of 413 principals and assistant principals and 319 school nurses.
• Quantitative analysis: REDCap & Excel.

Aims
• Assess the opinions and attitudes of school principals and nurses about youth vaping.
• Identify gaps and current concerns of schools.
• Inform public health recommendations.

Results

Opinions of School Principals and Nurses Towards Youth Vaping

Vaping is unhealthy
21%  10%  69%
Vaping and E-cigs are the same
38%  13%  49%
There is a youth vaping problem at my school
23%  41%  36%
Students from my school believe that vaping is harmless
45%  26%  29%
I know how to help a student quit vaping
44%  31%  25%
I know how to tell if a student is vaping
38%  22%  40%
I know of approaches to help prevent vaping among students
48%  32%  20%
School has adequate vaping tools & resources
7%   26%  67%
School should increase awareness about dangers of youth vaping

Vaping Interactions
Assisted due to side effects of vaping
12%  100%
Student sent to me because of vaping
18%  100%
Witnessed vaping
24%  100%

Survey Comments About Youth Vaping:
• “more resources and speakers needed”
• “high tax is a good starting point, treat it like tobacco”
• “more elementary education on youth vaping”
• “involve parents”
• “more information on this topic needs to be readily available”
• “more aggressive in advertisements”

Rankings of Health Concerns for Schools
#1 - Mental Health
40%
#2 - Vaping
22%
#3 - Nutrition
19%

Discussion
• Vape products are one of the most common forms of tobacco products and is an introductory product to later use of other tobacco products.
• Use of vape products is on the rise with higher prevalence in high schoolers and vulnerable populations.
• Survey results show school prevention for youth vaping could be improved.
• A majority of school principals and nurses feel that their schools need to do more to address dangers of youth vaping. Many schools do not have adequate resources for this work.
• There is a gap in knowledge, tools, and resources at schools.
• This implies a need for an effective prevention strategy in schools especially one that targets youth who are at high risk for vape use.
• Recently, Vermont’s General Assembly passed the Tobacco 21 law which: will increase sales taxes of EVP products to 92%, raise the smoking age from 18 to 21, and limit sales of EVPs online and in stores by requiring a VT seller license.

Future Directions
• Development and dissemination of a toolkit for schools, parents and students providing up-to-date information, guidance, and action steps are recommended.
• High risk schools should have prevention programs implemented in schools as young as elementary.
• Health officials should continue to monitor the youth EVP use to track the efficacy of the new legislation.

Respondents
• Total responses: 268
  - 107 Principals & Assistant Principals
  - 161 School Nurses
• All 14 VT counties were represented