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Letter: Electronic cigarettes put kids, teens, in harm's way

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To the Editor:

I was absolutely flabbergasted to read a Times' op-ed article (March 15) with the headline "E-cigarette tax would hurt N.J. tobacco quitters."

The article, by Gregory Conley, opposes a proposal by Gov. Chris Christie to tax electronic cigarettes the same way as tobacco cigarettes. It reads in part that these devices are a "smoke-free, tobacco-free alternative that many smokers and ex-smokers use to quit smoking."

Why am I so surprised that the Times would publish this article?

Go back to another op-ed that the Times ran on March 9, with the headline "Not e-lated over feds' lack of 'e-cig' oversight." Let me remind you of some of the contents of this article:

"Nicotine (which electronic cigarettes infuse into water vapor) doesn't have a pleasant taste. The 250 varieties of e-cigarettes get around this by adding flavors that go well beyond the menthol of traditional cigarettes ... watermelon, grape candy, raspberry limeade and cookies and cream flavors, to name a few. These aren't the flavors one would expect in a product targeting adults who have smoked for decades and are trying to kick the habit. In fact, e-cigarettes can not be marketed as a smoking cessation aid. ...

"The makers of e-cigarettes have their marketing eyes fixed firmly on the youth of the world. They're looking to find lifelong customers who start the nicotine addiction at a young age, making e-cigarettes a potential gateway to traditional tobacco cigarettes."

To think that e-cigarettes are a good way to give up smoking is idiotic. And to think that making e-cigarettes available to "tweens" and teens thinking that the devices will keep them off of tobacco cigarettes goes beyond idiotic.

A more accurate headline for the second op-ed would have been: "E-cigarettes will hurt N.J. adults and kids ... Beware."

http://www.nj.com/opinion/index.ssf/2014/03/letter_electronic_cigarettes_put_kids_teens_in_harms_way.html