Redox Biology 62 (2023) 102688

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Redox iology

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Endothelial damage in young adult e-cigarette users□

Ji Youn Youn [a], Holly R. Middlekauff [b], Isabelle Reudiseuli [b], Kai Huang [a], Hua Cai [a,b,*]

[a] Department of Anesthesiology, Department of Medicine, University of California Los Angeles, USA
[b] Department of Medicine, University of California Los Angeles, USA

The use of e-cigarettes has increased exponentially in recent years especially in young adults and teenagers. The US FDA has declared teenager use of e-cigarettes an epidemic, a severe public health problem. It has become evident that e-cigarettes, originally developed as means to help stop smoking, have toxic effects at cellular, organ and whole body levels [1]. In August 2019, e-cigarette, or vaping, product use-associated lung injury (EVALI) outbreak developed, resulting in 2, 0 hospitali ed cases and deaths as of February 1 , 2020 (CDC), among which 0 of the patients were under years old [1]. The patients suffer from shortness of breath, cough, chest pain, and gastrointestinal symptoms of nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal pain, and respiratory failure especially in those deceased. Evidence suggests that tetrahydrocannabinol (THC, active ingredient of marijuana) Vitamin E acetate (THC-containing e-li uid additive) was detected in approximately 0 all of the bronchoalveolar lavage samples of the EVALI cases, indicating potential pathophysiological basis of EVALI. A latest report on one-year follow-up of these patients (n = 1, median age 21) indicate that 0 of the patients ( ) had a subse uent health-care encounter, with 2 treated at ER or admitted to hospital [2]. The out in-patients (29 10) had symptoms and respiratory diagnosis, indicating lasting effects from initial development of EVALI [2]. Molecular mechanisms underlying EVALI and potential biomarkers of e-cigarette-related injuries however, have remained unknown.

In the present study, we examined circulating nitrite levels as an indicator of endothelial function in three different cohorts of young adults (n = , 21–2 years old) with similar demographics (Fig. 1A) except smoking status e-cigarette users (n = 1), tobacco cigarette smokers (n = 11) and non-users (n = 9). The e-cigarette participants were e-cigarette users for >1 year without usage of tobacco cigarettes within the last year and the tobacco smokers were those who smoked for >1 year without usage of e-cigarettes. It is intriguing to observe that circulating levels of nitrite, an indicator of endothelial function in humans [ ], were signi cantly lower in young adult e-cigarette users (Fig. 1), while this response was absent in tobacco users likely attributed to the fact *these were young adults with limited/reversible endothelial injuries* [,] (Fig. 1). f note, circulating cotinine levels were similarly elevated in e-cigarette users and tobacco users, indicating that there was no difference in smoking burden to explain this nding. During vaping of e-cigarettes, besides vapori ed nicotine, decomposed solvents and avoring additives are known to have toxic effects in inducing oxidative stress to potentially result in endothelial dysfunction [ ]. The fact that young adult e-cigarette users develop severe endothelial injuries might underlie development of EVALI since acute lung injury is characteri ed by endothelial damage in the lung proceeding in ammation and organising pneumonia as typical pathological features in EVALI cases [,] although the subjects studied in the current study were not exposed to THC-containing e-cigarettes, resulting in respiratory failure, which is however not usually observed in young adult tobacco users. Importantly, *this does not imply that tobacco smoking is less toxic*, rather, a possible uni ue mechanism of injury induced by use of e-cigarettes *even in young adults*, which alerts for more stringent regulations on e-cigarette use. These data for the rst time demonstrate endothelial damage in young adult e-cigarette users at the level of endothelial dysfunction, which plays a central role in the pathogenesis of a variety of cardiorespiratory diseases [9]. Therefore, regulations on e-cigarette use should be further enhanced to prevent EVALI and development of other pathological conse uences, and that circulating nitrite levels may be used as a novel and effective biomarker for heath damage attributable to e-cigarettes.

□ This work was supproted by HL I awards HL0 0 (HC), HL0 9 (HC), HL1 29 1 (HC), HL1 (HC) and HL1 2 0 (HC).
* Corresponding author. Department of Anesthesiology, Department of Medicine, University of California Los Angeles, USA.
E-mail addresses: hmiddlekauff mednet.ucla.edu (H.R. Middlekauff), hcai mednet.ucla.edu (H. Cai).

https doi.org 10.101 j.redox.202 .102
Received 1 February 202 Received in revised form 22 March 202 Accepted 22 March 202
Available online 24 March 2023

Data availability

Data will be made available on re uest.

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