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New Products Undermine Workplace Efforts to End Tobacco Use

Posted by [Alan Ayers](#) in [Health and Wellness](#)[Share](#) |

Throughout Dallas and numerous other cities and communities, smoking is going out of style. Local ordinances have banned smoking in bars and restaurants, and in more strict areas it's prohibited in parks and outdoor public spaces. Created to address the health concerns of employees of these establishments, non-smoking patrons also benefit from increased measures to eliminate a harmful habit. But what happens when an alternative is developed that enables users to continue the habit anytime, anywhere, regardless of restrictions?

Tobacco companies are approaching workplace and public efforts to reduce smoking as an opportunity to grow revenue by introducing new "smokeless" products. Touted as "workplace safe" and "spit-free," new dissolvable tobacco-laced mints and tobacco-filled pouches can be easily concealed in the mouth and used at work and school. This alternative approach to smoking is intended to allow consumers to consume nicotine throughout the day and prolong a dangerous habit, leading to serious health complications.

One product comes in a pocket-sized green and blue package labeled "fresh." When displayed at a store counter, they are hardly differentiated from the candy on display. Because these products are technically not cigarettes, they are not governed or restricted like cigarettes, and can be offered at lower price points. Some are even given away free as a trial offer. This approach is both insidious and dangerous as teens and young adults may find appeal in the marketing of smokeless products, only to transition to cigarettes once "hooked" on the nicotine. The result? A new market of smokers for tobacco companies.

Smokeless products pose their own risks including cancer and heart disease. According to a study by the American Cancer Society, men who switched to smokeless tobacco had higher death rates from heart disease, stroke, and various other causes of death. Research has shown that 90 percent of oral and throat cancers are attributed to smokeless tobacco use. And when tobacco is dissolved and swallowed, there is a potential risk of cancer to the stomach, pancreas, intestines, and colon.

But there is hope in the form of a newly passed law that allows the Food and Drug Administration to regulate the marketing and distribution of cigarettes and other tobacco products. Under the law, smokeless-tobacco makers can't say their products are healthier than cigarettes unless proven by the FDA. The regulations also limit product development and marketing, making it difficult for manufacturers to test new products. However, legislation alone cannot completely curb use of these harmful products.

Tobacco use has proven to be a major contributor to poor health, which has led to increased interest in cessation programs. Many companies turn to health care providers like Concentra to implement programs to help their employees shake their

addiction to nicotine. Using education, awareness, and medical leadership, Concentra's tobacco-cessation program includes a focus on these new products and has become a successful part of our TotalCare product – a comprehensive health and wellness program that identifies poor health issues and puts patients on a path to a healthier lifestyle.

No single government regulation or city ordinance can keep consumers from harmful products or making poor choices. Rather, by combining stronger legislation with medical leadership, patient education, and motivation, we can collectively improve the health of individuals and their communities. This is the formula for transforming patient health. It's also the mission of Concentra.

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Alan Ayers

Vice President,
Strategy and Execution

Alan works closely with our medical center teams on a range of initiatives, including our Urgent Care service, patient feedback programs, and medical center operations.

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