

THE TRUSTEE

April 2018
JUULING

As many trends begin in California, Kaiser Health reports on one that is swiftly moving eastward.

Students are carrying a small device that fits in the palm of their hand and appears a little bigger than a flash drive. It is a nicotine cartridge into which a Juul “pod” of liquid nicotine can be inserted. The cartridge heats it up and it can deliver about 200 puffs, the nicotine equivalent of a pack of 20 cigarettes. Its use is difficult to detect as the vapor cloud is small and dissipates quickly. In class, while the teacher is occupied, a student can take a “hit”, blow the vapor into their coat or backpack, and not get caught.

The electronic cigarette is becoming popular among teens and its use is spreading quickly. The inhalation of cancer causing chemicals and the addictive nature of nicotine is a concern for all, but especially among teens. To address the issue, some schools have banned flash drives and removed the main entrance doors from student bathrooms to dissuade juuling in the school building. Still, since the device is small and its use difficult to detect, students continue to smoke the e-cigs within the school building and at school events. It’s believed that because it’s called “juuling”, and not smoking or vaping, many students may be unaware of the nicotine effect. Although Juul Labs, the manufacturer, states the device is for adults, its size and availability on the internet is appealing to youth and the cartridge can be recharged on a laptop. There is a resell market on sites like Craigslist for youth who can’t present a 21 year old profile for internet purchase. A starter kit includes a cartridge or pen and four (4) pods for \$50. Due to the cost, it appears to be more prevalent in more affluent communities. The cartridges come in colorful designs and the juul “pods” offer flavors such as mango, mint, and crème brulee. Those smells can be associated with various body lotions, but the juul vapor smells fruity.

The FDA is still evaluating regular e-cigs, so don’t expect any quick response to this issue, especially as it affects adolescents.

NEW MEDICARE CARDS

Beginning now, in April 2018, and extending through April 2019, Medicare will begin distribution of new Medicare cards. To keep your information more secure and better protect your identity, the new cards will not contain your Social Security number.

To ensure delivery, make sure your mailing address is up to date. If it needs correcting, contact Social Security at: ssa.gov/myaccount or call [1-800-772-1213](tel:1-800-772-1213). Medicare will never call you and ask for personal info, so be aware of any scam phone calls.

As cards are being mailed over a period of a year, be patient. It’s coming!

APRIL – NATIONAL STD AWARENESS MONTH

During April, STD (sexually transmitted disease) Awareness Month, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) and health departments across the country are reaching out to healthcare

providers and patients alike focusing on the importance of a strong healthcare provider-patient relationship and how that relationship can contribute to effective STD prevention.

As STD's are at a record high, it has never been more important for providers to protect their patients' sexual health or for the patient to stand up for their sexual health. Patients should take charge of their sexual health, know how to stay safe and healthy, and to directly ask their healthcare provider for the care that they need and deserve. Data from the CDC indicate there is a hidden STD epidemic in the United States with an estimated 20 million new STDs occurring each year with the U.S. reaching record highs in 2016. Of the more than 2 million new infections, 1.6 million were chlamydia, the most prevalent of reported STDs. Syphilis, once nearing elimination, is now thriving. Reported primary and secondary syphilis cases and rates are at a 20-year national high. Cases of both chlamydia and gonorrhea have increased across New York State. Although Ulster County has the lowest reported increases in the Hudson Valley, nearby Albany County is the 4th highest in the state. Among school systems reporting to the NYSDOH, Small urban areas had a rate increase of nearly 150%. CDC estimates that youth ages 15-24 years old make up 25% of the sexually active population, but account for 50% of the 20 million new STDs that occur each year. It is a public health threat, yet, a topic of minimal discussion in schools and families.

Many STDs are curable and all are treatable. Effective prevention strategies include abstaining from sex, reducing the number of sexual partners, and consistently and correctly using condoms. Effective vaccines are available to prevent hepatitis B and nine types of the human papillomavirus ("HPV") that cause disease and cancer.

According to the NYSDOH Bureau of STD Prevention and Epidemiology (STDC@health.ny.gov) 2014 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, and 2012 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, 76% of New Yorkers support condom availability in high schools, 30,000 New York teens aged 15 to 19 are diagnosed with chlamydia each year, and 61% of high school students report having sexual intercourse by 12th grade.

IN MEMORIAM:
Matthew Ten Eyck