How to think AND feel about nicotine and the people who use it

Joe Gitchell
@jgitchell
PinneyAssociates, Inc.
Global Forum on Nicotine 2018
Financial Disclosures

• I work for PinneyAssociates, a health consulting firm. PinneyAssociates provides consulting services on tobacco harm minimization (including nicotine replacement therapy and digital vapor products) to Niconovum USA, RJ Reynolds Vapor Company, and RAI Services Company, all subsidiaries of Reynolds American Inc. RAI was purchased by British American Tobacco in July 2017

• I also own an interest in intellectual property for a novel nicotine gum that has neither been developed nor commercialized
Non-Financial Disclosures – Suppositions I can’t prove

• Health risks of nicotine use – contaminants and route
• FDA regulation impact in the US – not a guarantee of no mistakes, but very different from before 2009—plus we have other tools
• The policy, regulatory, and communications opportunities to leverage relative risk across nicotine products are the most promising way to reduce preventable, premature suffering and death rapidly
Overview

- *Short* list where I’ve been wrong
- Why is this so hard?
  - NB: Hard, but NOT complicated
- A path forward
Carefully-Curated Collection of My Nicotine Mistakes

- Nicotine is highly addictive
- Correcting misperceptions would make NRT the panacea
- Courage of curiosity
- Give-up fighting vaping bans
- UK leadership
Basic Truths

• Dr. Michael Russell had it right—nicotine is central to the addiction to cigarettes but not the cause of health harms

• There are now noncombustible products that the majority of smokers are at least willing to try, if not yet willing to adopt as replacements for cigarettes
Think VS Feel
Most scientific controversies aren’t about science at all, and once the sides are drawn, more data is unlikely to bring opponents into agreement. Michael Carolan, who researches the sociology of technology and scientific knowledge at Colorado State University, wrote in a 2008 paper about why objective knowledge is not enough to resolve environmental controversies. “While these controversies may appear on the surface to rest on disputed questions of fact, beneath often reside differing positions of value; values that can give shape to differing understandings of what ‘the facts’ are.” What’s needed in these cases isn’t more or better science, but mechanisms to bring those hidden values to the forefront of the discussion so that they can be debated transparently. “As long as we continue down this unabashedly naive road about what science is, and what it is capable of doing, we will continue to fail to reach any sort of meaningful consensus on these matters,” Carolan writes.

Why you think you're right — even if you're wrong
The Oatmeal’s Review of Motivated Reasoning and Confirmation Bias

http://theoatmeal.com/comics/believe
And you thought your job sucked
Three-fer to Tradeoffs

- Multiple goals allowed broader alliances and clear dividing lines
- Technology has freed nicotine from smoke with consumer appeal
- Facing tradeoffs or even reversals
Reduce death & disease

Reduce addiction

Corporate accountability
Disgusting

• Vaping looks like smoking which has been ostracized, particularly among policymakers
  – Kozlowski’s various takes
• Triggers an instinctive disgust reaction that our brains try to justify with harms (a la work by Haidt, Rozin)
• Might this be the basis for the array of continually-emerging concerns?
How do you feel to see these images?
More research is (ALWAYS) needed…

- Nanoparticles!
- VOCs!
- Heavy Metals!
- Renormalization!
- Gateway to cigs!
- Wet lung!

2\textsuperscript{nd}-hand (3\textsuperscript{rd}-hand!) nicotine exposure!

- Flavors!
- Reduced Quitting!
- Nicotine affects the brain!
- Arterial stiffness!
- Formaldehyde!
The nicotine in cigarettes is the substance that causes most of the cancer caused by smoking...

Gerlach et al, HINTS 2017 data, ms under review
Gerlach et al, HINTS 2017 data, ms under review, cross-hatch are “much” responders
To move forward

- Face trade-offs
- Accept #DiscomfortOfThought
- Face emotions and values that shape our thinking about drug use
- No monopoly
ONLY TWO THINGS ARE INFINITE, THE UNIVERSE AND HUMAN STUPIDITY, AND I'M NOT SURE ABOUT THE FORMER.

Albert Einstein
www.quote-coyote.com
The heart of it: two questions

1. OK to use nicotine without smoke, even if many physically dependent?
2. If yes, can the incumbent industry participate?
Yes!!

Please don’t make us say ‘Yes’!
F*ck No!!

F*ck No!!
What’s Really at Work – From Haidt’s *The Righteous Mind*

“Anyone who values truth should stop worshipping reason.”

---

**HOW TO WIN AN ARGUMENT**

The social intuitionist model offers an explanation of why moral and political arguments are so frustrating: because moral reasons are the tail wagged by the intuitive dog. A dog’s tail wags to communicate. You can’t make a dog happy by forcibly wagging its tail. And you can’t change people’s minds by utterly refuting their arguments. Hume diagnosed the problem long ago:

> And as reasoning is not the source, whence either disputant derives his tenets; it is in vain to expect, that any logic, which speaks not to the affections, will ever engage him to embrace sounder principles.  

If you want to change people’s minds, you’ve got to talk to their elephants.

Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, page 69-73 (per Google books)

“…each individual reasoner is really good at one thing: finding evidence to support the position he or she already holds, usually for intuitive reasons.”