



George Butterworth,  
Cancer Research UK,  
PO BOX 1561,  
Oxford OX4 9GZ

16 November 2020

Dear George,

I hope I should not need to reintroduce you to our charity, but I shall do so anyway under the circumstances. The NNA is a registered educational charity in the UK, which has the objective of promoting public health by means of tobacco harm reduction. The NNA was established to reflect the interests of those who have switched, or might switch in the future, from smoking tobacco to using safer alternatives. Many of our Trustees, Associates and Supporters are ex-smokers who have quit with the help of safer nicotine products, including e-cigarettes. We have collaborated on initiatives with public health organisations such as Public Health England and the National Centre for Smoking Cessation and Training, as well as giving evidence to UK government committees and All-Party Parliamentary Groups. We take no funding from any industry actors and have no conflicts of interest.

We are writing to express our deep disappointment at [a tweet](#) from your organisation's policy unit celebrating a research paper which smears consumer advocates for tobacco harm reduction - most notably those who have ceased smoking via vaping – by linking the consumer voice with industry in an attempt to cancel recognition of opinions from former smokers who have found safer nicotine products to have been beneficial to their lives and future.

To declare that CRUK are “excited” about a report which trawled personal citizen Twitter accounts and concluded that they were part of some mythical tobacco industry plot is deeply offensive and McCarthyist in nature and application.

In 2018, there were clear threats being expressed by the WHO FCTC in advance of COP8 towards products that vaping consumers value highly for helping them to quit smoking. The same threats have been amplified in advance of COP9 so consumers will quite naturally be prominent in objecting to them again.

It should be accepted that consumers of these products would be extremely worried at the thought of the products being prohibited by clearly conflicted and opaque institutions like the FCTC. Instead, however, this report that CRUK has celebrated – and shamefully part-funded - seeks to further marginalise the consumer voice which is already ignored far too often.

May I remind you that the report was primarily funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies; an organisation set up to distribute funds from an American multi-billionaire with little understanding of the THR debate and also little care for the consequences of his actions. We would also note that the lead author of the report you refer to has a proven history of manufacturing falsities against harm reduction options.

Your organisation has previously expressed an aspiration to involve consumers in research and not stigmatise them, but this incident - and other actions recently such as your reaction to a smear story by the similarly Bloomberg-funded and conflicted Bureau of Investigative Journalism - exhibit behaviour which is the exact opposite of what you claim.

Many consumers are very grateful for your support for reduced risk alternatives to smoking from which they have benefitted greatly, but their gratitude will evaporate very quickly if you continue to show them scant regard and try to silence them for wishing to protect the products that they advocate for in the face of threats. This week's report seems specifically designed to close down debate in advance of COP9.

We also note that your website states that *"Without vital funds, future cancer research is at risk. Donate now to get us back on track"*, yet the fallout from this CRUK tweet has led to our being contacted by supporters who regularly donate to CRUK but have now cancelled their support as a result. The NNA team decided not to publicise this on Twitter so as not to damage funding for your research, but we thought you should know that ordinary donors are questioning your use of funds on a misguided study which targets consumers simply for defending products they value for helping them to quit smoking.

Consumers would not recognise smear articles like this as befitting CRUK's criteria for funding research.

I would ask that you emphasise to your policy team that consumers should have a significant voice in what happens to safer alternatives to smoking and that trying to 'cancel' their input with baseless smears on their motivation is sinister, anti-democratic, unscientific and clearly wrong.

We will be submitting a response to the BMJ report and posting this letter on our website and social media, so would welcome your comments clarifying the position taken by CRUK towards consumer engagement on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M.C.', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Martin Cullip  
Chair  
New Nicotine Alliance

**About the New Nicotine Alliance:** The New Nicotine Alliance was founded as a registered charity ([1160481](#)) in 2015 to advance public understanding and awareness of ways to reduce the harms associated with cigarette smoking. We take a consumer-interest, scientific and public health perspective and wish to encourage a mature public discussion about the opportunities and risks of encouraging safer nicotine products to address the health, welfare and other harms associated with smoking.

**Disclosure:** The New Nicotine Alliance is completely independent of commercial interests in relevant industries (e-cigarettes, tobacco, pharmaceutical companies, etc.). It operates on a small budget and not-for-profit basis and is free from commercial bias. Our policies and statements are evidence-based, with a clear focus on the health of consumers and the wider public.