



## Are electronic cigarettes 95% less dangerous? Myths, scientific lies, and manipulations.

### *Summary*

In 2013, an arbitrarily chosen group of 12 self-proclaimed “experts” met in London for a workshop on the “risks posed by nicotine-containing products.” A series of criteria had been defined, some of which had no connection with health issues. Based on these, the group came to the conclusion that the risk from electronic cigarettes was only 4% compared to traditional cigarettes. This result was based on a series of subjective assessments. Furthermore, several participants had financial interests or other ties to the tobacco industry. Questions also remain as to the financing of this workshop.

In 2014, the results of this meeting were published in an article by the organisers at the time: electronic cigarettes would be 95% less harmful than traditional cigarettes. The “myth of the 95%” was formulated. The authors of the article even pointed out themselves that they lacked concrete evidence regarding the risks for most of the criteria used and the products studied.

This article was first cited in 2015 in a report by the former Public Health England (PHE), claiming that “e-cigarettes were 95% less harmful to health than traditional cigarettes.” PHE thus lent great credibility to a figure that was extremely easy to communicate – without any critical analysis. The myth of the 95% was born. The tobacco and nicotine industry immediately seized on it.

The 95% myth is therefore, on closer inspection, a factoid: unreliable information that has been repeated so often that it has come to be regarded as true.

Recent research has shown that electronic cigarettes pose significant respiratory and cardiovascular health risks. However, we lack the perspective to be able to assess the long-term risks and provide a definitive answer to the essential question, that is, “*to what extent are electronic cigarettes harmful to health?*” However, the absence of *current* evidence doesn’t prove that there *is in fact* no actual evidence of harm.

Claiming that electronic cigarettes are 95% less dangerous (or “safer”) than traditional cigarettes is therefore false.