

Forum outlines prevalence of vaping among youth

By **ERIC AVEDESIAN**
Cape May Star and Wave

SEA ISLE CITY — The 8-year-old boy on the video inhaled the e-cigarette deeply and exhaled smoke rings. Perfect cloudy halos fluttered through the air as his family, heard in the background, goaded him on with laughter.

Twenty minutes after video was shot, the boy was rushed to the emergency room for acute intoxication of nicotine. "It's a game-changer until you have to go to the emergency room. How would you approach that?" former U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) Special Agent Douglas Collier asked the audience during a presentation Feb. 8 in Sea Isle City.

During his time at the DEA, Collier conducted investigations in New York and New Jersey. He trained newly hired agents at the DEA academy in Quantico, Va., and was a training co-

ordinator for DEA personnel and numerous New Jersey law enforcement agencies. Collier also developed drug-training programs that were adopted by numerous substance-abuse organizations.

Now he's a criminal justice professor at Monmouth University and operates Drug Education Awareness, which provides drug education.

Collier used a PowerPoint presentation to illustrate the dangers of e-cigarettes, called vaping, which uses a battery-powered device to produce an aerosol mingled with flavors. The e-cigarettes and vape pens contain an e-liquid or e-juice and battery-powered heating component. The aerosol is inhaled similar to cigarette smoke.

One brand of vaping product, the JUUL, resembles a computer USB flash drive and is popular with youths. Collier said while e-cigarettes were marketed to help people stop smoking traditional ciga-

rettes, their use among young people has increased.

According to a Center for Disease Control and Prevention study cited in the presentation, e-cigarette use tripled among middle school and high school students in 2014.

Collier said younger smokers like vaping because it's more discreet, can be hidden easily and is easily obtainable. He said one University of Michigan study noted vaping has increased with adolescent users.

"They have never seen a drug more used and abused than this product called vaping," Collier said.

He noted that students secretly puff e-cigarettes in class, and their use is hard to detect because the products do not emit the pungent odors of cigarettes.

"We see students that never smoked regular cigarettes that are using e-cigarettes because we are not educating them. Most e-cigarettes contain nicotine, which causes addiction. A lot of our kids don't think it's nicotine," Collier said.

Collier said vaping causes severe irritation, coughing, increased airway resistance, chest pain, increased blood pressure, increased heart rate and some vomiting and nausea.

"We're finding more and more kids go into the emergency room for acute intoxication of nicotine," Collier

said. In addition to nicotine, vape juice contains Propylene Glycol (PG) and Vegetable Glycerin (VG), the flavorings used to mask the nicotine. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration considers both safe to be ingested. Both substances are found in food, pharmaceutical and cosmetic products.

Collier said ingesting small amounts of PG and VG is "fine," but inhaling in large amounts can be harmful.

Collier said he sent his 16-year-old son into a store in Atlantic City with his credit card to buy a JUUL vape for \$55. The clerk sold the boy the vape, even though the legal age to purchase smoking products in New Jersey is 21.

He said his son noted the warning on the box, which told users to let their bodies recover if they are having problems while vaping.

"It's a small black-boxed warning on there. He picked up on it, so that's unique," Collier said.

In what Collier called "the game-changer," some smokers are converting e-cigarettes into vaporizers for smoking marijuana.

Collier said vaping products are being marketed for younger smokers.

"We have to make sure we understand that this is a culture. We have to understand what this product is," Collier said.

E-cigarettes use lithium ion batteries to power the heating device. Collier said a compartment holds flavored e-liquids (vape juice), which can be swapped for cannabis oil.

"When you manipulate that vape, when you put in certain things that should not be in

there, things will happen," Collier said, showing photos of a 16-year-old boy whose face was severely burned after a vape exploded.

Collier said a chemical called diacetyl, found in vaping products, can damage cells lining the respiratory tract and can cause a disabling condition called "popcorn lung," which was found in workers who manufacture microwave popcorn who use the chemical.

Signs to identify vaping include the flavorful odors from e-liquids, products resembling pens or computer USB thumb drives, dry mouth and insatiable thirst, nosebleeds and passing on caffeine.

Collier said flakka, a synthetic drug, can be used with e-cigarettes. According to a news report Collier showed the audience, vaping synthetic drugs has caused significant overdoses.

"We're seeing more and more emergency rooms with our kids going in with this problem," Collier said.

The push for legalizing marijuana in New Jersey has come to the forefront through legislation aiming to decriminalize the drug and regulate its use. Gov. Phil Murphy made legalizing marijuana a promise in his 2017 campaign. The state currently regulates medical marijuana.

Collier noted the DEA recognizes marijuana as a Schedule I drug, with "no accepted medical use and high potential for abuse." Other Schedule I drugs include heroin, lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), methaqualone and peyote.

Different states passed laws to allow marijuana for medicinal purposes or passed full legalization.

Marijuana is legal in Alaska, California, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, Oregon, Vermont, Washington and the District of Columbia.

"It's a disparity that we have. Either we're going to use the federal laws as they should be or not. That's the challenge that we're having, the tug of war in government," Collier said.

He said education about these issues is important.

"You become the ambassador of what I try to give you. That's what we need for our community. Everybody fails to say it takes a community to raise our children. It's everybody else's job. I applaud you," Collier told the audience. "We have to make sure our greatest assets in life are taken care of, and it's our children."

Cape May County Prosecutor Jeffrey Sutherland said vaping is becoming prevalent with youth as a substitute for traditional cigarettes.

"A big part of what we have to do is community outreach and bringing topics like this to the public's attention before they become a bigger issue," Sutherland said. "It educates you and you can reach out and educate your family members or friends or neighbors. You really understand how big vaping is taking over. It's created this false sense of safety because it's not as smoking cigarettes, as we saw in the past of a joint with smoke coming off it. It's delivering materials that are very bad for the health of people."

Sea Isle City Police Chief Thomas McQuillen said the presentation was a collaboration of multiple agencies and organizations that provide substance abuse education to the public.

"This is our goal. The mayor has tasked us with coming up with a plan to educate the public in every way possible when it comes to these types of issues, whether it be vaping, pill and drug use, the heroin issues," McQuillen said. "Regardless of how you feel about vaping or the legalization or the use of marijuana, I think you've all got an obligation to hear all the true facts about it and take it back to our families and friends and help educate them."

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TIDES : Feb. 20-27, 2019

DATE	HIGH		LOW	
	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
20	8:19	8:49	1:46	2:30
21	9:09	9:39	2:39	3:18
22	9:58	10:30	3:33	4:06
23	10:48	11:23	4:27	4:55
24	11:41		5:24	5:46
25	12:18	12:38	6:24	6:41
26	1:18	1:41	7:28	7:39
27	2:21	2:48	8:34	8:40

MOON PHASES

Last quarter, Feb. 26

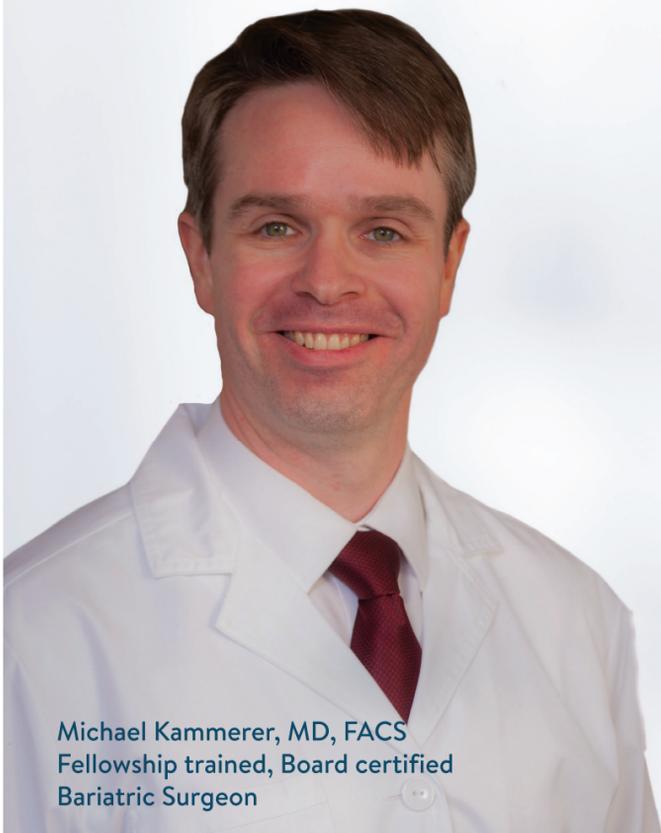
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