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Nicotine is the primary driver of tobacco addiction in the form of cigarettes, vapes and most other forms of commercial tobacco. The greatest health risks arise when tobacco is burned, which generates thousands of toxic substances.

PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

Movement touts addictive drug as beneficial, but dangers persist

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THE CONVERSATION

An ironic development emerging alongside the “Make America Healthy Again” movement is the portrayal of nicotine as a wellness and performance-enhancing product. Across social media, podcasts, wellness communities and tech startups, prominent wellness personalities and other influencers are portraying nicotine as a misunderstood compound whose potential benefits have been overshadowed by its negative association with cigarette smoking.

As a result, nicotine is being repositioned from an addictive substance linked to tobacco use to a natural product that can be used for everything from improving focus to protecting against cognitive decline. This trend includes use of nicotine alone in noncombustible products such as nicotine pouches, or in combination with caffeine and nootropics, which are substances marketed to enhance cognition.

As a pulmonary physician-scientist who studies nicotine addiction and the health consequences of tobacco and nicotine products, I am concerned about claims that nicotine can enhance wellness, productivity and cognitive performance.

Distinguishing between nicotine and tobacco

Some of these claims stem from the observation that nicotine is a naturally occurring plant compound found primarily in tobacco and in nightshade vegetables such as tomatoes, potatoes and eggplant in trace amounts. Proponents of nicotine use also draw on studies suggesting that nicotine can affect certain aspects of cognition and brain function.

However, extending these findings to broad



Nicotine, in products such as nicotine pouches, is being repositioned from an addictive substance linked to tobacco use to a natural product that can be used for everything from improving focus to protecting against cognitive decline.

claims about productivity, brain health, longevity or wellness goes well beyond what has been shown in human studies.

Nicotine is the primary driver of tobacco addiction in the form of cigarettes, vapes and most other forms of commercial tobacco.

The greatest health risks arise when tobacco is burned, which generates thousands of toxic substances, including carcinogens, carbon monoxide and fine particulate matter. Repeated exposure to these combustion products can cause cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cardiovascular disease and numerous other smoking-related illnesses.

While many smoking-related diseases result from exposure to combustion products, nicotine

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Hegseth: Execution to be live streamed

Vance says he’s unsure Pentagon’s plans will proceed

**Fernando Cervantes Jr.,
Amanda Lee Myers and James Powell**
USA TODAY

Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth said the firing squad execution of former Army Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan will be available for the public to see in what would be an unprecedented development in the history of the death penalty. However, Vice President JD Vance told reporters on Oct. 9 he is unsure whether the Pentagon will proceed with the live stream.

Hasan, who carried out a mass shooting at Fort Hood in Texas in 2009, will be getting a “firing squad of soldiers,” Hegseth said in comments to Real America’s Voice on Oct. 8.

“We’ll make sure that people are able to watch it, that it’s public,” he said. “Because people need to understand that there are serious consequences for these types of things.”

Hegseth confirmed that the execution would be live streamed by replying to a CBS News report on X and saying, “correct.”

Acting Secretary of the Army Adam Telle previously announced that Hasan’s execution would take place at Fort Hood on Dec. 3. Reuters reported that the Pentagon would announce further details.

But Vance is uncertain the plans will proceed as intended.

“I don’t know that that’s actually going to happen,” Vance told reporters in Cincinnati.

Vance added that if a livestream does occur, he is “not going to be watching it.”

Vance’s statement reflects a growing concern in Washington: the White House has been hearing comments from lawmakers, allies and religious leaders urging the administration to not live stream the execution, a senior White House official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

USA TODAY could find no record of an execution ever being live streamed by any government in the world. The nonprofit Death Penalty Information Center also could not find one, the center’s executive director, Robin Maher, told USA TODAY.

Maher said that Hegseth’s comments “may be more aspirational than based in reality.”

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Howell man arraigned on charges for threats against judge

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USA TODAY NETWORK – MICHIGAN

A man from Howell has been arraigned on charges in connection with making death threats against a sitting circuit court judge, according to a release from Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel.

Kyle Fawaz, 31, of Howell, was ar-

raigned Oct. 7 in Livingston County’s 53rd District Court. He faces charges of making a terroristic threat and use of a computer to commit a crime (both felonies with sentences up to 20 years) and malicious use of telecommunications services (a six-month misdemeanor).

Fawaz is accused of sending several text messages to his probation officer in August, stating his intent to kill the judge and adding he had large quantities of

chemicals that could be used to make a bomb, according to Nessel.

The judge in question had overseen a prior criminal case concerning Fawaz in Wayne County’s 3rd Circuit Court.

“Public servants, from judges to clerks to local officials and lawmakers, shouldn’t have to fear for their personal safety, or their very lives, for fulfilling their duties,” wrote Nessel.

“Threats of this nature are unaccept-

able against anyone, though when they are made against an officer of the court for their service to public safety, it’s a crime not only against the victim but also the institutions that keep all our communities safe.”

The case is being prosecuted by the Hate Crimes and Domestic Terrorism Unit, launched by Nessel in 2019.

— *Contact reporter Makayla Coffee at mcoffee@livingstondaily.com.*

