GTNF 2015
Bologna, Italy
Sept. 15-17
Session 18 – Heat not Burn

The final Next-Generation Products session did not disappoint. The heat-not-burn (HnB) technology discussion was likely the best-attended of all the GTNF 2015 sessions. The discussion pitted three titans of tobacco together to discuss the evolving HnB segment of the vapor industry. One major player is heavily involved in HnB, while the other two see personal vaporizers and e-cigarettes as the future of the industry.

Philip Morris International (PMI), Imperial Tobacco Group and British American Tobacco (BAT) have spent years attempting to develop less harmful tobacco products. Imperial owns Blu, the best-selling cigalike in the U.S. PMI has set its sights on HnB technology while also having a cigalike product, MarkTen (Solaris in the EU). BAT released its Vype brand in the U.K. in 2013, becoming the first international tobacco company to launch an e-cigarette.

The session centered on an HnB device developed by PMI, the iQOS. It uses short, cigarette-like sticks ("HeatSticks") that are heated to a maximum temperature of 250 C (482 F) to create a tobacco-flavored nicotine vapor. PMI's HeatSticks contain real tobacco, a point the company believes makes them more attractive than e-cigarettes to cigarette smokers. PMI maintained that iQOS could "encourage adult smokers to switch to the products and not encourage use by nonsmokers."

One of the main differences between HnB products and e-cigarettes is that, with e-liquid, you know exactly what you are putting into the product. "In terms of using (real) tobacco, you are likely to see much more chemistry going on," one representative said. PMI tests showed that iQOS produced a vapor on par with e-cigarettes, as compared to toxins released when tobacco is combusted. The company also showed that numerous tests proved that no combustion happens within the iQOS.

PMI also stated that the vapor produced by iQOS did not have a negative impact on indoor air quality. Nicotine was detectable in HeatStick vapor, however at levels 275 times lower than EU occupational exposure limits, according to PMI. "We are building a very systematic set of evidence that we hope will show in the future that iQOS is indeed a reduced-risk product," said a PMI representative. "We are not there yet, but all the data we have so far is extremely encouraging."

A critic maintained that, while iQOS may be safer than combustibles, it isn't as safe as e-cigarettes that use a safely produced e-liquid. PMI representatives disagreed. The main takeaway from the session is that studies show both categories carry less risk than combustible tobacco. PMI said it expects to submit iQOS to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for consideration as a reduced-risk tobacco product in 2016.