Up: the rise of nitrous oxide abuse. An international survey of contemporary nitrous oxide use and abuse.

In recent years the recreational use of inhaled nitrous oxide gas (NO) has become increasingly popular yet little is known about the characteristics of its users or the effects they experience. The anaesthetic and euphoric effects of NO are well established, however case reports and experimental studies have established that regular exposure to nitrous oxide can, though inactivation of vitamin B12 metabolism, lead to megaloblastic anaemia and polyneuropathy.

This paper presents original research from the Global Drug Survey, the largest survey of recreational drug use in the world, which establishes NO as a very common drug of use, in particular in the UK (38.4% lifetime prevalence) and one that causes considerable adverse effects including hallucinations, confusion and accidental injury. Furthermore, polydrug use is common and a subpopulation of heavy or dependent recreational users maybe be experiencing significant neurological harms including polyneuropathy.