



# GHANA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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## **GHANA ANAESTHETISTS' SOCIETY AND GHANA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION** **STATEMENT ON THE ILLICIT USE OF NITROUS OXIDE**

The Ghana Anaesthetists Society (GAS) and the Ghana Medical Association (GMA), have noted with concern, reports in the media that suggest the increasing use of Nitrous Oxide popularly known as "balloon" for recreational purposes. Equally worrying is the ease of access for such a potentially dangerous drug.

Nitrous oxide is one of the anaesthetic gases in clinical use. As an anaesthetic drug, it has the potential to reduce consciousness which is accompanied by breathing difficulties and cardiovascular depression.

It is also known to worsen respiratory conditions like pneumothorax and increase the risk of developing severe forms of pneumonia.

Its prolonged use can cause anaemia and nerve damage especially in patients with underlying nutrient deficiency (Vitamin B12). It also has the potential for addiction with the likelihood of severe harm and death.

The use of the drug can also compromise breathing which can kill in less than 10 minutes. This mandates that Nitrous Oxide is used strictly by trained personnel (Anaesthesiologists) who have the requisite knowledge and skill to manage its side effects in a hospital environment.

GAS, the professional body of all Doctor Anesthetists (Anaesthesiologists) in Ghana and the GMA, fully support the Food and Drugs Authority in its effort to clamp down the illicit use of Nitrous oxide. GAS and GMA call on the Police and other security agencies to join in this endeavour as a matter of urgency in the interest of public safety.

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