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Ramírez, Noelia, Özel, Mustafa Z., Lewis, Alastair C. [orcid.org/0000-0002-4075-3651](http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4075-3651) et al. (3 more authors) (2014) Exposure to nitrosamines in thirdhand tobacco smoke increases cancer risk in non-smokers. *Environment International*. pp. 139-147. ISSN 0160-4120

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envint.2014.06.012>

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1 **Exposure to Nitrosamines in Thirdhand Tobacco Smoke increases Cancer Risk in Non-**  
2 **Smokers**

3 Noelia Ramírez<sup>a</sup>, Mustafa Z. Özel<sup>a</sup>, Alastair C. Lewis<sup>b</sup>, Rosa M. Marcé<sup>c</sup>, Francesc Borrull<sup>c</sup>,  
4 Jacqueline F. Hamilton<sup>a\*</sup>

5 <sup>a</sup> The University of York, Department of Chemistry, Heslington, York YO10 5DD, UK

6 <sup>b</sup> National Centre for Atmospheric Science, The University of York, Department of Chemistry,  
7 Heslington, York YO10 5DD, UK

8 <sup>c</sup> Department of Analytical Chemistry and Organic Chemistry, Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Marcel·lí  
9 Domingo s/n, Sescelades Campus, Tarragona 43007, Spain

10 \*Corresponding author:  
11 Dr. Jacqueline F. Hamilton  
12 The University of York  
13 Department of Chemistry  
14 Heslington  
15 York YO10 5DD, UK  
16 Tel. + 34977559560  
17 Fax + 34977558446  
18 E-mail: [jacqui.hamilton@york.ac.uk](mailto:jacqui.hamilton@york.ac.uk)

19 **Abstract**

20 In addition to passive inhalation, non-smokers, and especially children, are exposed to residual  
21 tobacco smoke gases and particles that are deposited to surfaces and dust, known as thirdhand  
22 smoke (THS). However, until now the potential cancer risks of this pathway of exposure have  
23 been highly uncertain and not considered in public health policy. In this study, we estimate for the  
24 first time the potential cancer risk by age group through non-dietary ingestion and dermal  
25 exposure to carcinogen N-nitrosamines and tobacco-specific nitrosamines (TSNAs) measured in  
26 house dust samples. Using a highly sensitive and selective analytical approach we have  
27 determined the presence of nicotine, eight N-nitrosamines and five tobacco-specific nitrosamines  
28 in forty-six settled dust samples from homes occupied by both smokers and non-smokers. Using  
29 observations of house dust composition, we have estimated the cancer risk by applying the most  
30 recent official toxicological information. Calculated cancer risks through exposure to the observed  
31 levels of TSNAs at an early life stage (1 to 6 years old) exceeded the upper-bound risk  
32 recommended by the USEPA in 77 % of smokers and 64 % of non-smokers homes. The  
33 maximum risk from exposure to all nitrosamines measured in a smoker occupied home was one  
34 excess cancer cases per one thousand population exposed.

35 The results presented here highlight the potentially severe long-term consequences of THS  
36 exposure, particularly to children, and give strong evidence of its potential health risk and,  
37 therefore, they should be considered when developing future environmental and health policies.

38 **Keywords:** thirdhand tobacco smoke; cancer risk assessment; N-nitrosamines; tobacco-specific  
39 nitrosamines (TSNAs)

40

41 **1. Introduction**

42 Each year 600,000 people die worldwide from exposure to environmental tobacco smoke (Oberg  
43 et al. 2011), also called second hand smoke (SHS). As numerous countries have introduced  
44 smoking bans in public places (WHO 2010), domestic environments have become the main  
45 sources of passive smoking exposure (World Health 2007). However, the risks of tobacco  
46 exposure do not end when a cigarette is extinguished and non-smokers, especially children, are  
47 also at risk through contact with surfaces and dust contaminated with residual smoke gases and  
48 particles, the so-called third hand smoke (THS) (Matt et al. 2004; Matt et al. 2011a). Over 40% of  
49 children have at least one smoking parent (Oberg et al. 2011) and [numerous](#) studies have  
50 demonstrated the association between prenatal and early stage childhood diseases and the  
51 smoking habits of their parents (Cook and Strachan 1999). Although there is a general public  
52 awareness about the harms of SHS, the general public are more sceptical about THS, with a  
53 study in 2009 finding that 62.5 % of non-smokers and 43 % of smokers agreed that THS harms  
54 children (Winickoff et al. 2009). A study of parents' attitudes found that fathers and heavy  
55 smokers (>10 cigarettes per day) were less likely to believe that THS was harmful (Drehmer et al.  
56 2012). The specific role of THS in tobacco-related illnesses has been questioned by the public  
57 health community (Matt et al. 2011a), however, a recent study demonstrated that chemical  
58 species associated with THS are genotoxic in human cell lines (Hang et al. 2013). Evidence of the  
59 chemical toxicity of THS is necessary to improve understanding of the risks of THS-polluted  
60 environments and to design educational strategies for families and the general public to allow  
61 them to make more informed decisions.

62 Nicotine is the most abundant organic compound emitted during smoking (Sleiman et al. 2010)  
63 and is considered a good marker of tobacco exposure. After cigarette smoking, nicotine deposits  
64 almost entirely on indoor surfaces, where it can be released again to the gas phase or react with  
65 ozone, nitrous acid and other atmospheric oxidants producing secondary pollutants, such as  
66 tobacco-specific nitrosamines (TSNAs) (Sleiman et al. 2010). Figure 1 shows the structures and  
67 reaction pathways of formation of the main TSNAs. Of the TSNAs identified, N'-nitrosonornicotine  
68 (NNN) and 4-(methylnitrosoamino)-1-(3-pyridyl)-1-butanone (NNK) are the most prevalent and  
69 most active carcinogens in tobacco products (Hecht and Hoffmann 1988; Hecht 2003), inducing  
70 tumours in lung, liver, nasal cavities, oesophagus and exocrine pancreas, and are classified as  
71 carcinogenic for humans (Group 1 International Agency for Research on Cancer, IARC) ((IARC  
72 2007 ). Whilst some TSNAs can be directly produced during tobacco smoking, several studies  
73 have suggested that airborne NNK concentrations in sidestream cigarette smoke can increase by  
74 50-200% per hour during the first 6h after cigarettes are extinguished (Schick and Glantz 2007).  
75 Moreover, NNK can further degrade and its main metabolite, 4-(methylnitrosoamino)-1-(3-pyridyl)-  
76 1-butanol (NNAL), is considered to have similar adverse health effects (Hecht 2008).

77 Given the low volatility of TSNAs and the high levels of nicotine typically found in environments  
78 contaminated with tobacco, TSNAs can persist for weeks to months in THS. Several studies have

79 detected nicotine in indoor dust and surfaces (Kim et al. 2008; Matt et al. 2011a) and recent  
80 studies have demonstrated a correlation between the number of cigarettes smoked and the  
81 presence of nicotine and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) (Hoh et al. 2012) in settled  
82 house dust. The health risk from THS will be substantially controlled however by the prevailing  
83 levels of TSNAs. Whilst these species have been seen directly in tobacco smoke (Mahanama and  
84 Daisey 1996), there has been no measurement of their presence in THS.

85 Here we report the detailed determination of nicotine and five TSNAs (indicative of a tobacco  
86 smoking source) and eight non-specific volatile N-nitrosamines (commonly released during  
87 tobacco smoking, but likely to have additional environmental sources), in settled house dust  
88 samples from homes occupied by smoking or non-smoking occupants. The complete list of these  
89 target compounds is shown in Table 1. We have calculated the cancer risk related to exposure to  
90 observed concentrations of the carcinogen N-nitrosamines and TSNAs through non-dietary  
91 ingestion and dermal exposure by age group. For the first time, we use ambient observations to  
92 constrain risk assessment estimations of exposure to these carcinogens in THS, based on real-  
93 world measurements.

## 94 2. Material and methods

### 95 2.1. Sample collection and preparation

96 A total of 46 house dust samples were collected from private homes, using conventional vacuum  
97 cleaners in regular use in households between October 2011 and May 2012 in the area of  
98 Tarragona (north-eastern Spain). [We have selected those samples whose residents have lived in](#)  
99 [their current home for at least one year.](#) A questionnaire was designed to collect information about  
100 the house and any activity that might affect chemical loading (see Supplementary Material, Table  
101 S1). [A summary of the collected information can be found in Table 2.](#) As seen in the Table, most  
102 [of the samples were flats in urban areas with low to moderate traffic intensity \(up to 14,041](#)  
103 [vehicles per day, Spanish Ministry of Public Works, personal communication\).](#) Around half (48%)  
104 of the samples were characterized as from smokers' homes, where at least one occupant was a  
105 tobacco smoker, including those whose occupants do not smoke inside the home. The mean  
106 number of cigarettes smoked per day in this group was 17 including cigarettes smoked both  
107 inside the home and at other locations outside the homes. The remainder of the samples (52%)  
108 were classified as non-smokers' homes, according to the survey information. [See Table 2 for](#)  
109 [other relevant characteristics relevant of the homes included in this study.](#)

110 The collected dust was sieved with an acetone washed stainless steel sieve and the fraction  
111 under 100 µm was stored in glass vials, preserved from light and kept at 4°C until analysis.

### 112 2.2. Sample extraction and chromatographic analysis

113 We have extracted [500 mg of](#) the sieved dust samples by pressurised liquid extraction (PLE)  
114 using ASE 200 equipment (Dionex, Sunnyvale, CA, USA) with ethyl acetate as extraction solvent  
115 and silica as clean-up sorbent. Extracts were preserved from light and frozen at -20°C until  
116 analysis. Under the optimized extraction conditions, recoveries for most compounds were higher  
117 than 80%. Complete information about the PLE extraction conditions, their optimization and  
118 validation can be found in a previous study (Ramírez et al. 2012).

119 House dust is a complex matrix containing hundreds of inorganic and organic compounds. To  
120 improve selectivity and sensitivity we have analysed the extracts by comprehensive gas  
121 chromatography coupled with a nitrogen chemiluminescence detector (GC×GC-NCD) that consists  
122 of a 7890 gas chromatograph, a 255 Nitrogen Chemiluminescence Detector, both from Agilent  
123 (Palo Alto, CA, USA) and a quad-jet dual stage modulator from LECO (St. Joseph, MI, USA). The  
124 first column was a non-polar BPX5 (30 m × 0.25 mm × 0.25 µm, 5% diphenyl, 95%  
125 dimethylpolysiloxane) and the second column a BPX50 (1.5 m × 0.10 mm × 0.10 µm, 50%  
126 diphenyl 50% dimethylpolysiloxane) both from SGE Analytical Science (VIC, Australia). Analysis  
127 were performed by injecting 1 µL of the dust extracts, at 200°C in splitless mode, at a helium  
128 constant flow of 1 mL min<sup>-1</sup>. First dimension oven temperature program started at 40°C, hold for 2

129 min, 5°C min<sup>-1</sup> to 100°C, hold 4 min and 5°C min<sup>-1</sup> to 300°C for 2 min. The modulator and second  
130 oven temperature were 15°C above the first dimension oven and the modulation period was 5 s.

### 131 2.3. Quality assurance

132 Settled dust samples were extracted within one week after collection. Blanks of every step of the  
133 analytical process were analysed for every five extracted samples and no detectable amounts of  
134 the target compounds were found in the blanks. A subset of the samples (20%) were extracted  
135 and analysed in triplicate, with an observed precision less than 8% RSD. Limits of detection  
136 (LOD) ranged between 2.5 and 16 ng g<sup>-1</sup>. More information about quality assurance and figures of  
137 merits of the analytical method can be found in a recent publication (Ramírez et al. 2012).

### 138 2.4. Cancer risk assessment

139 Human exposure to THS is through non-dietary ingestion of settled house dust, dermal absorption  
140 from the dust attached to fabrics and surfaces, and the possible inhalation of THS chemicals  
141 revolatilised into the gas phase or those partitioned to breathable particles (Matt et al. 2011a). In  
142 this study we have analysed the dust fraction under 100 µm diameter and, therefore, we have  
143 considered ingestion and dermal absorption as the main pathways of human exposure to this  
144 THS contaminated dust. The potential risk associated with this type of exposure is dependant on  
145 age. Children, especially toddlers, are most at risk from non-dietary ingestion due to a number of  
146 factors including: they spend relatively more time indoors; they engage in activities close to the  
147 floor; they have hand-to-mouth behaviours; and they are more vulnerable to chemical exposure  
148 because of their immature metabolism (USEPA 2008).

149 Table 1 shows the toxicological data relevant for this study including IARC classifications of the  
150 target tobacco-related compounds (IARC 2013) and the oral slope factor values of the  
151 carcinogenic ones. Cancer risk was estimated for the ten carcinogenic target nitrosamines, whose  
152 toxicological values have been established by an official agency (NDMA, NMEA, NDEA, NDPA,  
153 NPyr, NMor, NPip, NDBA, NNN and NNK) (IRIS 2013; OEHHA 2007). Oral slope factor values  
154 were extracted from databases provided by the Integration Risk Information System (IRIS) (IRIS  
155 2013) from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the California Office  
156 of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) (OEHHA 2007), giving priority to IRIS  
157 values.

158 We calculated the cancer risk by non-dietary ingestion using the following equation (USEPA 2004,  
159 2005)

$$Risk_{ingestion} = \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{C_i \cdot IR \cdot CF \cdot EF \cdot ED}{BW \cdot AT} \cdot SF_i \cdot ADAF \quad [1]$$

160 where  $C_i$  is the concentration (mg kg<sup>-1</sup>) in the settled house dust samples of each of the 10  
161 carcinogen nitrosamines considered in this study ( $i$ );  $IR$  is the Ingestion Rate (mg day<sup>-1</sup>) by age  
162 group;  $CF$  is the Correction Factor (10<sup>-6</sup> kg mg<sup>-1</sup>);  $EF$  is the Exposure Frequency (days year<sup>-1</sup>);  $ED$

163 is the Exposure Duration (years); *BW* is the average Body Weight; *AT* is the Average Time of life  
 164 (25550 days, corresponding to 70 lifetime years); *SF<sub>i</sub>* is the oral Slope Factor [(mg×kg×day)<sup>-1</sup>]  
 165 specific for each carcinogen; and *ADAF* is the default Age-Dependant Adjustment Factor  
 166 (unitless) that correct the non-age-specific slope factors. The values for these parameters (age  
 167 intervals: birth to <1; 1 to <6; 6 to <21; and 21 to 70) were selected according to the USEPA  
 168 criteria for dust exposure (USEPA 2011), except for the body weight for adults that is from the  
 169 National Institute of Statistics of the Spanish government (INE 2001). These values are shown in  
 170 the Supplementary Material, Table S2.

171 Cancer risk from dermal exposure was calculated using Equation 2 (USEPA 2004, 2005):

$$Risk_{dermal} = \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{C_i \cdot CF \cdot AF \cdot ABS \cdot EV \cdot SA \cdot EF \cdot ED}{BW \cdot AT} \cdot \frac{SF_i}{ABS_{GI}} \cdot ADAF \quad [2]$$

172 Where *AF* is the Adherence Factor (mg cm<sup>-2</sup> per event) by age interval; *ABS* is the Absorption  
 173 Fraction (unitless); *EF* is the Event Frequency (event day<sup>-1</sup>); *SA* is the body surface area (cm<sup>-2</sup>);  
 174 and *ABS<sub>GI</sub>* is the fraction of carcinogen Absorbed in Gastrointestinal tract (unitless), that has been  
 175 considered as 1 for all age groups (USEPA 2004). The values of these parameters were extracted  
 176 from the USEPA Risk Assessment Guidance for Superfund, Vol. 1 (USEPA 2004) and are  
 177 summarized in the Supplementary Material, Table S3. Because of the lack of information about  
 178 *ABS* factor of the target carcinogens, we have followed the USEPA recommendations that  
 179 consider that 10% of the concentration of semivolatile compounds is dermally absorbed (USEPA  
 180 2007).

181 Finally, we have also estimated the daily intake of nicotine by age group that was calculated as  
 182 the sum of the results obtained using Equations 3 and 4 for non-dietary ingestion and dermal  
 183 exposure, respectively (USEPA 2004).

184

$$EDI_{ingestion} = \frac{C \cdot IR}{BW} \quad [3]$$

185

$$EDI_{dermal} = \frac{C \cdot SA \cdot AF \cdot ABS}{BW} \quad [4]$$

186

187 For all the risk assessment calculations, nitrosamines concentrations below the LODs and the  
 188 LOQs were replaced with a value equal to half the LOD or half the LOQ in accordance with the  
 189 USEPA criteria (USEPA 2000 ).

## 190 [2.5. Statistical analyses](#)

191 [Statistical analyses were carried out with Statgraphics- Plus 5.1 \(Magnugistic, Rockville, MD,](#)  
 192 [USA\). Because of the wide and skewed distribution of concentrations, data were log-transformed](#)  
 193 [prior to the statistical analyses. The transformed data followed a normal distribution. Linear](#)



194 | [regressions and t-test were conducted to compare the medians and assess correlations between](#)  
195 | [the different variables. Measurements under the LODs and LOQs were substituted with a value of](#)  
196 | [one-half the LOD or the LOQ, respectively.](#)

### 197 3. Results

#### 198 3.1. Nicotine and nitrosamines in settled house dust

199 A summary of the concentrations of the 14 target compounds analysed in this study in house dust  
200 | samples collected in the homes classified as smokers' and non-smokers' are shown in Table 3.  
201 | The number of occurrences of each compound in the samples is also indicated. As expected, the  
202 | total concentrations of the 14 target compounds in house dust were higher in smokers' homes  
203 | than in the non-smokers' ones, with total abundances up to a factor of 60 higher, and with median  
204 | concentrations around a factor of 8 higher. Nicotine, which is the main marker of tobacco smoke,  
205 | was detected in all the studied samples, including those from non-smoker occupied homes,  
206 | demonstrating the extent to which THS can spread beyond the source. Nicotine was the most  
207 | abundant organic nitrogen target compound found in both non-smokers' and smokers' homes with  
208 | median concentrations of  $2.3 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$  and  $26 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$ , respectively, and the maximum value observed  
209 | was  $342 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$  in one of the smokers' dust samples.

210 The TSNA's studied were most frequently detected in smokers' homes dust samples (41-95%),  
211 | except for NNK, which was more frequently detected in non-smokers' homes, but at much lower  
212 | concentrations (median  $0.54 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$  in smokers' dust and  $0.04 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$  in non-smokers'). The most  
213 | abundant TSNA was N-nitrososatabine (NAT, max. up to  $73 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$  in smokers' dust). Although,  
214 | some differences have been found in the individual concentrations, the total concentrations of the  
215 | non-specific nitrosamines (NDMA, NMEA, NDEA, NDPA, NMor, NPyr, NPip and NDBA) in both  
216 | kinds of samples were statistically comparable (test t,  $p=0.05$ ). Among these compounds N-  
217 | nitrosomethylethylamine (NMEA) was the most abundant, occurring in all the smokers' samples  
218 | and in 91% of the non-smokers' samples, with median concentrations of  $0.36 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$  and  $0.44 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$   
219 |  $\text{g}^{-1}$  respectively (median values statistically comparable, t-test,  $p=0.05$ ).

220 Representative chromatograms of the dust samples are shown in Figure 2 and show the  
221 | increased number of different organic nitrogen compounds found in the house dust collected in a  
222 | smokers' home.

223 To determine the influence of tobacco smoke in THS composition, we have investigated the  
224 | relationship of nicotine with the number of cigarettes smoked by all occupants per day. The  
225 | nicotine concentrations observed were correlated with the number of cigarettes smoked per day  
226 | by the occupants inside the homes ( $R^2=0.859$ ,  $p<0.001$ , [Supplementary Material, Figure S1A](#)).  
227 | Furthermore, these nicotine levels also correlated with the cigarettes that the occupants smoked  
228 | at locations outside their homes ( $R^2=0.628$ ,  $p<0.001$ , [Supplementary Material, Figure S1B](#)). A  
229 | medium degree of correlation was found between the total TSNA's concentrations and the nicotine

230 concentrations in house dust samples from smokers' homes ( $R^2=0.466$ ,  $p<0.001$ , [Supplementary](#)  
231 [Material, Figure S2](#)), but this was not apparent in the non-smokers' samples ( $R^2=0.028$ ,  $p>0.001$ ).  
232 The non-specific N-nitrosamines did not correlate with nicotine concentrations in either non-  
233 smokers' ( $R^2=0.04$ ,  $p>0.001$ ) or smokers' ( $R^2=0.07$ ,  $p>0.001$ ) house dust samples, indicating that  
234 external ambient air pollution is likely the main source of these compounds.

### 235 3.2. Cancer risk assessment of THS exposure

236 Using the observed concentrations of the target species, cancer risk assessment was estimated  
237 for the ten carcinogenic target nitrosamines with available official toxicological data. The  
238 cumulative cancer risk through non-dietary ingestion by group age and the cumulative risk  
239 considering a lifetime exposure of 70 years, calculated using Equation 1, are shown in Table [4a](#).  
240 The highest calculated risks were for children from 1 to < 6 years, exposed to observed levels in  
241 house dust from smokers' homes, with a median calculated risk of  $9.6\times 10^{-5}$  (9.6 additional cancer  
242 cases per 100,000 children exposed) and a maximum risk of  $1.0\times 10^{-3}$  (1 additional cancer cases  
243 per 1,000 children exposed). House dust values from non-smokers' homes gave lower risk  
244 estimates, with median and maximum risk values of  $3.3\times 10^{-5}$  and  $1.7\times 10^{-4}$ , respectively. For the 1  
245 to <6 years age group, the estimated risk for ALL the samples from non-smoking homes in this  
246 study exceeded the USEPA guideline of 1 excess cancer cases per 1 million population exposed  
247 (USEPA 2011). Furthermore, for a lifetime exposure, 83% of the non-smokers' and all the  
248 smokers' samples also exceeded the upper-bound excess lifetime cancer risk recommended by  
249 the WHO for carcinogens in drinking water ( $1\times 10^{-5}$ ) (WHO 2011). The specific role of tobacco  
250 smoke in these risk estimations can be evaluated using the combined contribution of the two  
251 carcinogenic TSNAs, NNN and NNK. For children between 1 to <6 years the median and  
252 maximum ingestion risk estimated for these TSNAs were  $3\times 10^{-5}$  and  $9.9\times 10^{-4}$  for smokers' homes  
253 and  $1.9\times 10^{-6}$  and  $1.8\times 10^{-5}$  for non-smokers' homes. For this age group, the estimated risk for  
254 these TSNAs exceeded the upper-bound of  $10^{-6}$  in 77% of the smokers' and 64% of the non-  
255 smokers' homes and the  $10^{-5}$  threshold in 50% of the smokers', and 27% of the non-smokers'  
256 homes. The contribution of the other 3 TSNAs to the risk cannot be estimated because of the lack  
257 of toxicological data.

258 The calculated risk estimates, based on a lifetime exposure (0-70 years) to the individual  
259 carcinogen nitrosamines in house dust for a non-dietary ingestion pathway, are shown in Figure 3.  
260 In smokers' dust the median estimated risk of five target compounds (NDMA, NMEA, NDEA,  
261 NDBA and NNK) compounds exceeded the USEPA threshold ( $10^{-6}$ ). Of these, the tobacco  
262 specific compound NNK, presented the highest contribution to the risk with a median risk over  
263 WHO guideline ( $10^{-5}$ ) and a maximum over  $10^{-3}$ . In non-smokers' samples three compounds  
264 (NMEA, NDBA and NNK) presented median risks over  $10^{-6}$  and of these only NMEA median risk  
265 was over  $10^{-5}$ .

266 Dermal absorption is another important pathway of exposure to contaminants bound to settled  
267 dust. However, this pathway is usually overlooked in risk assessment estimations. The dermal

268 exposure risks, accepting a 10% of dermal absorption value for all the carcinogen compounds  
269 (USEPA 2007), as a compromise, are summarised in Table 4b. Since the estimated dermal risks  
270 depend, among other factors, on the body surface, this pathway of exposure is more relevant for  
271 adults. The median and maximum levels calculated for dermal exposure over a lifetime of 70  
272 years were  $2.1 \times 10^{-5}$  and  $2.3 \times 10^{-4}$  in the smokers' homes and  $7.3 \times 10^{-6}$  and  $3.7 \times 10^{-5}$  in non-  
273 smokers' ones. Although dermal risks estimates were generally lower than those found through  
274 non-dietary ingestion, the values in most of the samples still exceeded the USEPA threshold.  
275 Assuming both pathways of exposure to settled house dust contaminated with THS, the cumulative  
276 risks can be estimated as the sum of the non-dietary ingestion and the dermal absorption risks.  
277 Assuming this lifetime exposure to both pathways, 96% of the smokers' dust samples and 83% of  
278 the non-smokers' were calculated to exceed the  $10^{-5}$  risk threshold.

279 In addition to any carcinogenic effects, chronic and acute non-carcinogenic effects may also be  
280 related to THS exposure. We have also evaluated the exposure to nicotine, which was the most  
281 abundant target compound in both kinds of samples (see Equations 3 and 4). The estimated daily  
282 intake of nicotine by ingestion and dermal contact of THS is shown in Table 4, with a maximum  
283 calculated daily intake of up to 1.73  $\mu\text{g}$  per kg of body weight for children living in the smoker  
284 occupied houses studied.

#### 285 4. Discussion

286 Since the detection of nicotine in house dust for the first time by Hein et al. in 1991 (Hein et al.  
287 1991), the contamination of residential homes with THS has been demonstrated mainly based on  
288 the occurrence of nicotine, 3-ethenylpyridine and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons in dust, air  
289 and surfaces of smokers' homes and non-smokers' homes formerly occupied by smokers (Hoh et  
290 al. 2012; Matt et al. 2004; Matt et al. 2011b; Singer et al. 2003). The potential role of THS in  
291 tobacco-related illnesses has been questioned however because of the poor level of  
292 characterisation of the constituents of THS, as well as the lack of studies focused on human  
293 exposure. Furthermore, recent studies question whether nicotine levels are representative of the  
294 carcinogenic tobacco-related compounds in THS (Matt et al. 2011b). Whilst TSNAs have been  
295 suspected to form part of THS as a result of laboratory studies (Sleiman et al. 2010), here, we  
296 demonstrate for the first time the ubiquitous presence of carcinogenic tobacco-specific  
297 compounds, such as TSNAs, in settled house dust found in a panel of smokers' and non smokers'  
298 homes.

299 Comparing with previous studies the concentrations of nicotine found in the non-smokers' dust  
300 samples in this study were similar to those found in a previous study in San Diego (Matt et al.  
301 2011b), but lower than those reported in Baltimore (Kim et al. 2008). Here we also detected  
302 TSNAs in non-smokers' homes, indicating that THS is certainly an additional pathway of exposure  
303 of non-smokers to TSNAs. The lack of correlation between nicotine and TSNAs concentrations in  
304 smoke-free homes would suggest that TSNAs formed in smoking environments, can then persist  
305 for extended periods, possibly due to partitioning to ambient particles, and subsequently be

306 transported into non-smokers' homes from outside. This hypothesis would predict that urban non-  
307 smoking homes would be more exposed to external particulate matter than rural homes. Dust  
308 samples collected from urban homes in multiple occupancy buildings, such as flats and  
309 apartments, showed generally higher concentrations of TSNAs, but further research is needed to  
310 confirm this trend. In the same way, nicotine showed no clear relationship with the concentrations  
311 of the non-specific N-nitrosamines observed in non-smokers' homes, but concentrations were  
312 elevated in urban apartment homes occupied by non-smokers.

313 In contrast, a [moderate](#) correlation was observed between nicotine concentrations and the  
314 concentrations of TSNAs in smoker occupied homes, indicating that the majority of the TSNAs  
315 observed at these locations were the result of smoking within the home. The influence of other  
316 parameters, such as the ageing of the dust, the amount of airborne oxidants, the frequency of  
317 vacuum cleaning and ventilation could explain the weak correlation between nicotine and TSNAs  
318 observed in some samples. These parameters should be taken into account in future studies to  
319 better understand nicotine degradation in indoor environments. Although in general non-specific  
320 N-nitrosamines were higher in smokers' homes, there was not a clear correlation between these  
321 compounds and the concentrations of nicotine. This lack of correlation could be explained  
322 because of the high vapour pressures of some N-nitrosamines that tend to exist predominantly in  
323 the gas phase (Mahanama and Daisey 1996). However, other sources of atmospheric N-  
324 nitrosamines can contribute to the concentrations of N-nitrosamines in settled house dust,  
325 especially in urban and high traffic areas with high levels of pollution from combustion processes  
326 and cooking.

327 Another important issue addressed here is whether or not smokers who smoke only outside the  
328 home, but in close proximity, place their children at potential risk. Previous studies found that the  
329 PM<sub>10</sub> and nicotine concentrations in homes, where members of the households only smoked  
330 outside, were significantly higher compared with the homes of non-smoking families (Matt et al.  
331 2004; Rumchev et al. 2008). The strong correlation between the concentrations of nicotine that  
332 were found in the house dust from smokers' homes and the number of cigarettes smoked by the  
333 members of the household outside their homes demonstrates that tobacco smoke components  
334 are released to indoor environments by additional pathways such as off-gassing from the  
335 smokers' clothing or exhaled toxins.

336 The results presented here indicate that significant concentrations of N-nitrosamines and TSNAs  
337 are present in houses contaminated with cigarette smoke, however risk estimate calculations  
338 have limitations and uncertainties should be taken into account. First, there is limited available  
339 toxicological data about the target compounds. For example, the main metabolite of NNK, NNAL,  
340 does not have official toxicological data but is suspected to have the similar carcinogenicity as its  
341 precursor (Hecht 2008). Therefore, the risk of exposure to the NNAL levels observed could not be  
342 estimated. Also, most of the body weight values used for risk assessment calculations come from  
343 the USA average (USEPA 2011). Since the samples were taken in Spain and average weights

344 are lower in this country (INE 2001), the use of the USA values is probably underestimating the  
345 risk exposure.

346 Additional uncertainty comes from the assumption of 10% dermal absorption for all compounds,  
347 which provides only a rough approximation of the true risks of this pathway of exposure.  
348 Moreover, it has to be considered that in the presence of nitrous acid the skin-bound dust nicotine  
349 could react producing 0.05% NNK (Sleiman et al. 2010). According to this, the households can be  
350 dermally exposed to an extra 0.16, 0.23, 0.33 and 0.44 ng of NNK per day per kg of body weight,  
351 by age group, respectively.

352 Other uncertainties come from the consideration that the risks for the individual compounds are  
353 cumulative, but possible mixture-related effects, such as antagonistic, synergistic, potentiating or  
354 additive may occur in complex mixtures (Sterner 2010) such as THS. Because of the absence of  
355 information about these mixture-related effects, we could not consider them in this study. In  
356 addition, the risk estimated here has not considered other pathways of exposure such as the re-  
357 suspension and inhalation of the finest particles of dust. [Moreover](#), the re-estimation of risk by  
358 replacing non-detected values with  $\frac{1}{2}$  LOD and non-quantified values with  $\frac{1}{2}$  LOQ could  
359 overestimate risk, but only in less than 15% of samples (USEPA 2000). [Finally, house dust  
360 samples included in this study were collected using the households' vacuum cleaners in their  
361 regular use. The collection of settled dust in a specific surface area of the house using a cyclone  
362 vacuum cleaner would also allow the estimation of the risk by means of surface loading  
363 measurements, which are usually more appropriate for human exposure assessment](#) (Mercier et  
364 al. 2011).

365 Despite the uncertainties and limitations associated with risk estimates, this study presents the  
366 first clear evidence about the potential risk of exposure to nitrosamines and TSNAs, whose only  
367 source is tobacco, observed in house dust. The cancer risk values estimated here demonstrate  
368 that THS is a major pathway of exposure of N-nitrosamines and TSNAs, even in some non-  
369 smokers' homes. Although the risk is significant for all the age groups, children between 1 and <6  
370 years old are especially vulnerable to THS exposure, through accidental ingestion of settled  
371 house dust and through contact of exposed surfaces followed by hand to mouth transfer. The  
372 maximum risk calculated was for a home where 3 members of the household smoked, with the  
373 cumulative cancer risk of exposure to levels in this house estimated as 1 additional cancer case  
374 per 1000 children exposed. A recent report of the WHO estimated that 40% of children are  
375 exposed to second hand smoke (Oberg et al. 2011). However, this may be an underestimate of  
376 the impact of smoking on children and the number and type of exposure should be revised  
377 according with the risk levels found in THS here. We have demonstrated that house dust in some  
378 non-smoker occupied homes contained chemical tracers of THS. The cancer risk for children,  
379 through ingestion of settled house dust contaminated with NNN and NNK, exceeded the USEPA  
380 recommended threshold in 64% of the dust samples collected in non-smokers' homes. Settled  
381 house dust has already been estimated to be the major route of exposure of children to lead and  
382 some persistent organic pollutants (Ott et al. 2007). Besides, the estimated daily intake of nicotine

383 may cause chronic health effects and potentially nicotine-addiction in non-smokers, including  
384 children (IARC 2004).

## 385 **5. Conclusions**

386 In this study, we have determined the presence of 14 tobacco-related organic nitrogen  
387 compounds in settled house dust samples from smokers' and non-smokers' homes. Our study  
388 demonstrates for the first time the widespread presence of tobacco related carcinogens in house  
389 dust, even in "smoke free" environments. Cancer risk assessment of the carcinogen compounds  
390 showed that settled dust is a major route of exposure to TSNAs in children and non-smokers who  
391 are not directly exposed to secondhand smoke. Hence, the risk of exposure of non-smokers to  
392 tobacco through inadvertent ingestion and dermal exposure of thirdhand smoke should not be  
393 overlooked, and its impact included in future educational programs and tobacco-related public  
394 health policies.

## 395 **Acknowledgments**

396 NR, MZO, ACL and JFH want to acknowledge the financial support of the UK Natural  
397 Environment Research Council (Grant NE/J008532/1) and FB and RMM the support of the  
398 Direcció General de Recerca of the Government of Catalonia through project 2009SGR223. The  
399 authors acknowledge Dr J. Ferré for statistical discussions and Dr M. Pedrouzo for lab assistance.

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510 **Table 1.** IARC classification and oral slope factors of target compounds included in our  
 511 study, and the source of this information.

| Nitrosamine   | IARC classification <sup>a</sup> | Oral slope factor |
|---|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| N-nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA)                         | 2A                               | 51 <sup>b</sup>   |
| N-nitrosomethylethylamine (NMEA)                      | 2B                               | 22 <sup>b</sup>   |
| N-nitrosodiethylamine (NDEA)                          | 2A                               | 150 <sup>b</sup>  |
| N-nitrosodi-n-propylamine (NDPA)                      | 2B                               | 7 <sup>b</sup>    |
| N-nitrosomorpholine (NMor)                            | 2B                               | 6.7               |
| N-nitrosopyrrolidine (NPyr)                           | 2B                               | 2.1 <sup>b</sup>  |
| N-nitrosopiperidine (NPip)                            | 2B                               | 9.4 <sup>c</sup>  |
| N-nitrosodi-n-butylamine (NDBA)                       | 2B                               | 5.4 <sup>b</sup>  |
| Nicotine  | -                                | -                 |
| N <sup>1</sup> -nitrosornicotine (NNN)                | 1                                | 1.4 <sup>c</sup>  |
| N <sup>1</sup> -nitrosoanatabine (NAT)                | 3                                | -                 |
| N <sup>1</sup> -nitrosoanabasine (NAB)                | 3                                | -                 |
| 4-(methylnitrosoamino)-1-(3-pyridyl)-1-butanone (NNK) | 1                                | 49 <sup>c</sup>   |
| 4-(methylnitrosoamino)-1-(3-pyridyl)-1-butanol (NNAL) | -                                | -                 |

<sup>a</sup> IARC classifications: group 1, carcinogen to humans; group 2A, possible carcinogen to humans; group 2B, probably carcinogen to humans; group 3, not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans (IARC, 2013).

<sup>b</sup> Data from IRIS (IRIS, 2013)

<sup>c</sup> Data from OEHHA (OEHHA, 2007)

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**Table 2.** Characteristics of the homes and the households included in this study

| <b>Characteristics</b>               | <b>Smokers' homes (n=22)</b>  | <b>Non-smokers' homes (n=24)</b>  |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Home</b>                          |   |   |
| <u>Location</u>                      | <u>Urban: 81%</u><br><u>Suburban: 19%</u><br><u>Low to moderate traffic</u>                                   | <u>Urban: 87%</u><br><u>Suburban: 13%</u><br><u>Low to moderate traffic</u>                                   |
| <u>Building information</u>          | <u>Age*: 12</u><br><u>Flat: 81%</u><br><u>House: 19%</u><br><u>Fireplace: 0%</u><br><u>Carpeted floor: 0%</u> | <u>Age*: 18</u><br><u>Flat: 87%</u><br><u>House: 13%</u><br><u>Fireplace: 0%</u><br><u>Carpeted floor: 0%</u> |
| <b>Households information</b>        |   |   |
| <u>Kind of residents</u>             | <u>Adults*: 2</u><br><u>Homes with children: 27%</u><br><u>No. Children: 1 or 2</u><br><u>Ages*: 7</u>        | <u>Adults*: 2</u><br><u>Homes with children: 37%</u><br><u>No. Children: 1 or 2</u><br><u>Ages*: 6</u>        |
| <u>Pets</u>                          | <u>None: 82%</u><br><u>One: 18%</u>   | <u>None: 79%</u><br><u>One: 21%</u>   |
| <u>Smokers per home</u>              | <u>From 1 to 3</u>  |   |
| <u>Number of cigarettes per day*</u> | <u>Total smoked cigarettes: 17</u><br><u>Cigarettes smoked indoors: 5</u>                                     | <u>-</u><br><u>-</u>  |
| <b>Household products</b>            |   |   |
| <u>Use of incense or candles</u>     | <u>14% of the homes</u><br><u>Frequency*: 1/week</u>  | <u>8% of the homes</u><br><u>Frequency*: 1/week</u>   |
| <b>Cleaning information</b>          |   |   |
| <u>Vacuum frequency*:</u>            | <u>1.5/week</u>   | <u>1.5/week</u>   |
| <u>Ventilation frequency:</u>        | <u>Everyday 54%</u><br><u>Twice a week: 32%</u><br><u>Once a week: 9%</u>                                     | <u>Everyday: 50%</u><br><u>Twice a week: 42%</u><br><u>Once a week: 8%</u>                                    |

\* Median values

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**Table 3.** Concentrations of the target compounds in the settled house dust samples ( $\mu\text{g g}^{-1}$ ).  
%Quant. indicates the samples in which the target species were above the LOQ.

| Compound | Smoker's house dust ( $\mu\text{g g}^{-1}$ , n=22) |       |        |       |      |          | Non-smoker's house dust ( $\mu\text{g g}^{-1}$ , n=24) |       |        |      |      |          |
|----------|--|-------|--------|-------|------|----------|--|-------|--------|------|------|----------|
|          | Min  | 0.25  | Median | 0.75  | Max  | % Quant. | Min  | 0.25  | Median | 0.75 | Max  | % Quant. |
| NDMA     | n.d.   | 0.01  | 0.01   | 0.31  | 3.9  | 45       | n.d.   | 0.003 | 0.003  | 0.01 | 2.0  | 9        |
| NMEA     | 0.02   | 0.20  | 0.36   | 0.60  | 1.6  | 100      | n.d.   | 0.22  | 0.44   | 1.1  | 3.2  | 91       |
| NDEA     | n.d.   | 0.002 | 0.04   | 0.15  | 1.2  | 59       | n.d.   | 0.002 | 0.01   | 0.03 | 0.39 | 35       |
| NDPA     | n.d.   | 0.001 | 0.003  | 0.005 | 0.03 | 9        | n.d.   | n.d.  | n.d.   | n.d. | <LOQ | 0        |
| Nmor     | n.d.   | 0.003 | 0.01   | 0.01  | 1.9  | 36       | n.d.   | 0.002 | 0.01   | 0.01 | 0.08 | 22       |
| Npyr     | n.d.   | 0.002 | 0.003  | 0.01  | 0.27 | 14       | n.d.   | 0.002 | 0.002  | 0.01 | 0.05 | 13       |
| Npip     | n.d.   | 0.002 | 0.01   | 0.04  | 0.73 | 50       | n.d.   | 0.002 | 0.002  | 0.01 | 0.07 | 22       |
| NDBA     | n.d.   | 0.04  | 0.10   | 0.23  | 0.54 | 91       | n.d.   | 0.03  | 0.07   | 0.12 | 0.37 | 83       |
| Nicotine | 4.33   | 17    | 26     | 62    | 342  | 100      | 0.62   | 1.5   | 2.3    | 3.3  | 5.3  | 100      |
| NNN      | n.d.   | 0.004 | 0.02   | 0.20  | 1.8  | 41       | n.d.   | 0.004 | 0.004  | 0.02 | 0.05 | 22       |
| NNT      | n.d.   | 0.003 | 0.07   | 2.7   | 73   | 55       | n.d.   | 0.003 | 0.01   | 0.03 | 1.5  | 26       |
| NNB      | n.d.   | 0.07  | 0.51   | 1.8   | 13   | 82       | n.d.   | 0.003 | 0.00   | 0.01 | 0.03 | 9        |
| NNK      | n.d.   | 0.02  | 0.54   | 1.6   | 20   | 68       | n.d.   | 0.02  | 0.04   | 0.06 | 0.37 | 74       |
| NNAL     | n.d.   | 0.15  | 0.46   | 1.4   | 16   | 95       | n.d.   | 0.01  | 0.03   | 0.06 | 1.3  | 39       |
| Total    | 6.6  | 21    | 31     | 90    | 426  |          | 1.4  | 3     | 4      | 4.9  | 6.8  |          |

520 | **Table 4a.** Cancer risk estimations for the **non-dietary ingestion** of settled house dust, by  
 521 | age group, expressed in number of calculated excess cancer cases per exposed population.

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| Age range (years) | Smokers'             |                      |                      |                      |                      | Non-smokers'         |                      |                      |                      |                      |
|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
|                   | Min                  | 25%                  | Median               | 75%                  | Max                  | Min                  | 25%                  | Median               | 75%                  | Max                  |
| Birth to <1       | $3.7 \times 10^{-6}$ | $1.6 \times 10^{-5}$ | $4.0 \times 10^{-5}$ | $8.3 \times 10^{-5}$ | $4.3 \times 10^{-4}$ | $8.8 \times 10^{-7}$ | $5.9 \times 10^{-6}$ | $1.4 \times 10^{-5}$ | $2.0 \times 10^{-5}$ | $7.0 \times 10^{-5}$ |
| 1 to <6           | $9.0 \times 10^{-6}$ | $3.9 \times 10^{-5}$ | $9.6 \times 10^{-5}$ | $2.0 \times 10^{-4}$ | $1.0 \times 10^{-3}$ | $2.1 \times 10^{-6}$ | $1.4 \times 10^{-5}$ | $3.3 \times 10^{-5}$ | $4.9 \times 10^{-5}$ | $1.7 \times 10^{-4}$ |
| 6 to < 21         | $3.0 \times 10^{-6}$ | $1.3 \times 10^{-5}$ | $3.2 \times 10^{-5}$ | $6.6 \times 10^{-5}$ | $3.4 \times 10^{-4}$ | $7.0 \times 10^{-7}$ | $4.8 \times 10^{-6}$ | $1.1 \times 10^{-5}$ | $1.6 \times 10^{-5}$ | $5.6 \times 10^{-5}$ |
| 21 to 70          | $1.7 \times 10^{-6}$ | $7.6 \times 10^{-6}$ | $1.9 \times 10^{-5}$ | $3.9 \times 10^{-5}$ | $2.0 \times 10^{-4}$ | $4.1 \times 10^{-8}$ | $2.8 \times 10^{-6}$ | $6.4 \times 10^{-6}$ | $9.5 \times 10^{-6}$ | $3.3 \times 10^{-5}$ |
| Birth to 70       | $1.7 \times 10^{-5}$ | $7.5 \times 10^{-5}$ | $1.9 \times 10^{-4}$ | $3.9 \times 10^{-4}$ | $2.0 \times 10^{-3}$ | $4.1 \times 10^{-6}$ | $2.8 \times 10^{-5}$ | $6.4 \times 10^{-5}$ | $9.5 \times 10^{-5}$ | $3.3 \times 10^{-4}$ |

523 | **Table 4b.** Cancer risk estimations for the **dermal exposure** to settled house dust, by age  
 524 | group, expressed in number of cases per exposed population.

| Age range (years) | Smokers'             |                      |                      |                      |                      | Non-smokers'         |                      |                      |                      |                      |
|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
|                   | Min                  | 25%                  | Median               | 75%                  | Max                  | Min                  | 25%                  | Median               | 75%                  | Max                  |
| Birth to <1       | $9.3 \times 10^{-8}$ | $4.1 \times 10^{-7}$ | $1.0 \times 10^{-6}$ | $2.1 \times 10^{-6}$ | $1.1 \times 10^{-5}$ | $2.2 \times 10^{-8}$ | $1.5 \times 10^{-7}$ | $3.5 \times 10^{-7}$ | $5.1 \times 10^{-7}$ | $1.8 \times 10^{-6}$ |
| 1 to <6           | $3.2 \times 10^{-7}$ | $1.4 \times 10^{-6}$ | $3.5 \times 10^{-6}$ | $7.3 \times 10^{-6}$ | $3.8 \times 10^{-5}$ | $7.7 \times 10^{-8}$ | $5.3 \times 10^{-7}$ | $1.2 \times 10^{-6}$ | $1.8 \times 10^{-6}$ | $6.1 \times 10^{-6}$ |
| 6 to < 21         | $5.1 \times 10^{-7}$ | $2.2 \times 10^{-6}$ | $5.5 \times 10^{-6}$ | $1.1 \times 10^{-5}$ | $5.9 \times 10^{-5}$ | $1.2 \times 10^{-7}$ | $8.3 \times 10^{-7}$ | $1.9 \times 10^{-6}$ | $2.8 \times 10^{-6}$ | $9.6 \times 10^{-6}$ |
| 21 to 70          | $1.0 \times 10^{-6}$ | $4.6 \times 10^{-6}$ | $1.1 \times 10^{-5}$ | $2.4 \times 10^{-5}$ | $1.2 \times 10^{-4}$ | $2.5 \times 10^{-7}$ | $1.7 \times 10^{-6}$ | $3.9 \times 10^{-6}$ | $5.7 \times 10^{-6}$ | $2.0 \times 10^{-5}$ |
| Birth to 70       | $2.0 \times 10^{-6}$ | $8.6 \times 10^{-6}$ | $2.1 \times 10^{-5}$ | $4.4 \times 10^{-5}$ | $2.3 \times 10^{-4}$ | $4.7 \times 10^{-7}$ | $3.2 \times 10^{-6}$ | $7.3 \times 10^{-6}$ | $1.1 \times 10^{-5}$ | $3.7 \times 10^{-5}$ |

525 | **Table 5.** Estimated daily intake of nicotine by non-dietary ingestion and dermal exposure,  
 526 | expressed in ng per kg of body weight per day.

| Age range (years) | Smokers' |     |        |     |      | Non-smokers' |     |        |     |     |
|-------------------|----------|-----|--------|-----|------|--------------|-----|--------|-----|-----|
|                   | Min      | 25% | Median | 75% | Max  | Min          | 25% | Median | 75% | Max |
| Birth to <1       | 21       | 95  | 129    | 307 | 1637 | 3.0          | 6.6 | 11     | 16  | 25  |
| 1 to <6           | 22       | 100 | 136    | 325 | 1729 | 3.1          | 6.9 | 12     | 17  | 27  |
| 6 to < 21         | 13       | 61  | 83     | 197 | 1048 | 1.9          | 4.2 | 7.1    | 10  | 16  |
| 21 to 70          | 13       | 60  | 81     | 193 | 1030 | 1.9          | 4.1 | 7.0    | 10  | 16  |

527 **Figure captions**

528 **Figure 1.** Structures and formation pathways of the main tobacco specific N-nitrosamines  
529 (TSNAs).

530 **Figure 2.** GC×GC-NCD chromatograms of smokers' (A) and non-smokers' settled house dust  
531 (B).

532 **Figure 3.** Percentile distribution of the LCRs of the carcinogen nitrosamines, in smokers' (a)  
533 and non-smokers' settled house dust (b). The box plot of each carcinogen nitrosamines  
534 represents the 25th and 75th percentile of the LCRs and the horizontal line inside the box  
535 indicates the median LCR. The bottom and the top lines indicate the minimum and the  
536 maximum LCRs, and the circle symbols the average LCR. The horizontal red line indicates  
537 the threshold risk recommended by USEPA ( $10^{-6}$ ).