

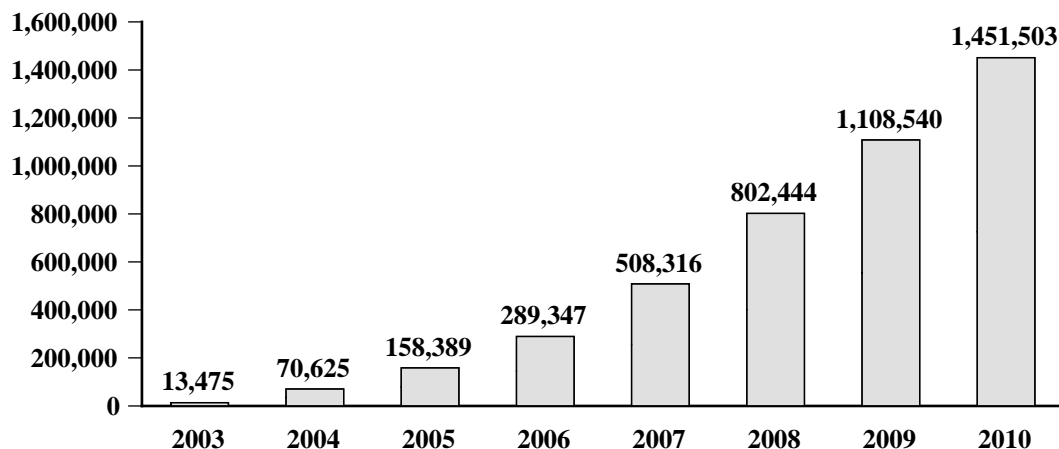
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

U.S. Retail Distribution of Buprenorphine Approaches 1.5 Million Grams

After buprenorphine was approved to treat opioid dependence in 2002 (see *CESAR FAX*, Volume 20, Issue 22), the DEA's Automation of Reports and Consolidated Orders System (ARCOS) began tracking the retail distribution of this synthetic opioid. ARCOS monitors "controlled substance activity from the point of manufacture and/or distribution to the point of sale to the retail level registrant (e.g., pharmacies, hospitals, practitioners, teaching institutions, researchers, analytical labs, importers/exporters, and narcotic treatment programs)" (Leonhart, p. 3). The number of grams of buprenorphine distributed to these retail outlets has increased from 13,475 in 2003 to 1,451,503 in 2010. Previous research has found that increases in sales of other opioid analgesics are correlated with increases in unintentional overdose deaths involving these drugs (see *CESAR FAX*, Volume 20, Issue 21).

Number of Grams of Buprenorphine Distributed to Retail Outlets, 2003-2010



NOTES: ARCOS does not capture transaction information from these retail outlets to end users. ARCOS tracks all Schedule I and II materials (manufacturers and distributors); Schedule III narcotic and gamma-hydroxybutyric acid (GHB) materials (manufacturers and distributors); and selected Schedule III and IV psychotropic drugs (manufacturers only).

SOURCES: Adapted by CESAR from U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), Office of Diversion Control, *Special Report: Methadone and Buprenorphine, 2003-2008*, 2009 (2003-2006 ARCOS data); DEA, ARCOS data requests 2/17/2009 (2007 data), 1/25/2010 (2008 data), 4/14/2010 (2009 data), 5/2/2011 (2010 data); DEA, Office of Diversion Control, Automation of Reports and Consolidated Orders System (ARCOS) website (<http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/arcos/index.html>), accessed 6/17/11; and Leonhart, M., "Warning: The Growing Danger of Prescription Drug Diversion," *Statement before the Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing and Trade Committee on Energy and Commerce, U.S. House of Representatives*, 4/14/11.