

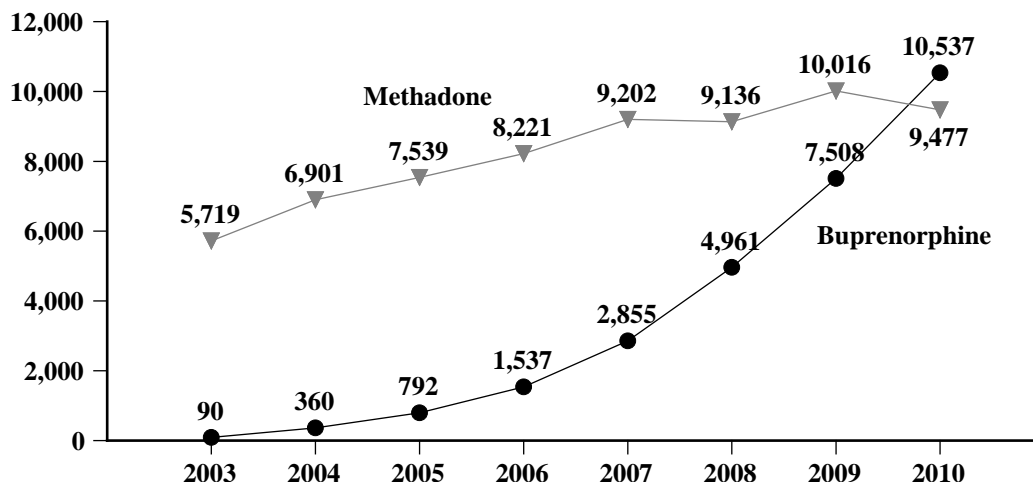
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

Buprenorphine Now More Likely Than Methadone to Be Found in U.S. Law Enforcement Drug Seizures

Buprenorphine is now more likely than methadone to be found in law enforcement drug seizures that are submitted to and analyzed by forensic laboratories across the country, according to data from the National Forensic Laboratory Information System (NFLIS). NFLIS monitors illicit drug abuse and trafficking, including the diversion of legally manufactured pharmaceuticals into illegal markets. From 2003 to 2009, the number of methadone reports increased gradually, reaching a peak of 10,016 in 2009, and then decreased slightly to 9,477 in 2010. In contrast, the number of buprenorphine reports has increased dramatically, from 90 in 2003, to 10,537 in 2010. Regardless of whether diverted buprenorphine is being used nonmedically to self-treat opiate addiction or to get high, unsupervised use of diverted buprenorphine places users at serious risk for potential adverse health effects, especially when taken in combination with other opioids or with depressants such as sedatives, tranquilizers, or alcohol. The next issue of the *CESAR FAX* will discuss regional trends in buprenorphine drug seizures.

**Estimated Number of Total Methadone and Buprenorphine Reports,
U.S. Law Enforcement-Seized Drug Exhibits Analyzed by Forensic Laboratories, 2003-2010**



NOTES: Estimates are calculated using the National Estimates Based on All Reports (NEAR) methodology (see www.nflis.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/Reports.aspx). Annual data are based on drugs submitted to laboratories during the calendar year and analyzed within three months of the end of the calendar year. Up to three drugs can be reported for each drug item or exhibit analyzed by a laboratory. State and local policies related to the enforcement and prosecution of specific drugs may affect drug evidence submissions to laboratories for analysis. Laboratory policies and procedures for handling drug evidence may also vary. For example, some analyze all evidence submitted, while others analyze only selected items.

SOURCES: Adapted by CESAR from data provided by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Office of Diversion Control, Drug and Chemical Evaluation Section, Data Analysis Unit on 3/21/2012.