

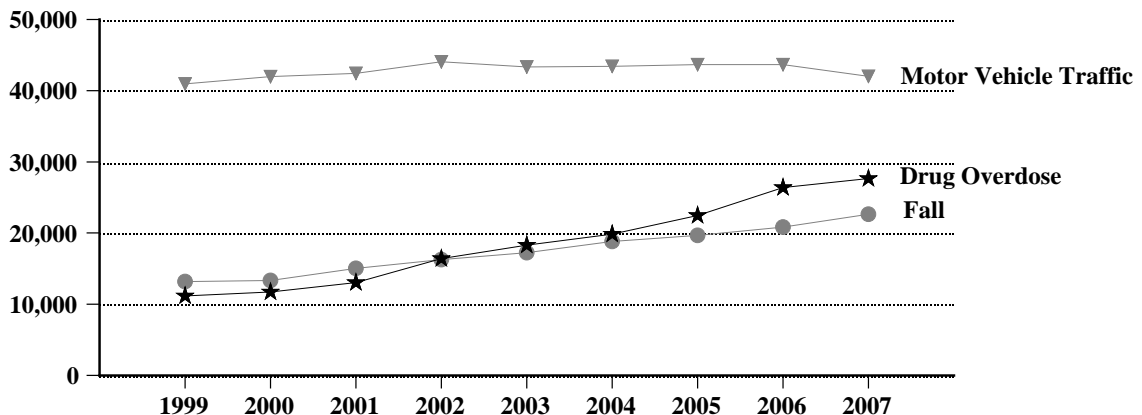
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

Unintentional Drug Overdose Deaths Continue to Increase; Now Second Leading Cause of Unintentional Deaths

While motor vehicle traffic accidents continue to be the leading cause of unintentional deaths in the United States (comprising 42,031 or 34% of all such deaths in 2007), drug overdose deaths have been rapidly increasing. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there were 27,658 unintentional drug overdose deaths in 2007, more than double the 11,155 deaths in 1999. Drug overdose deaths now account for 24% of all unintentional deaths and surpass falls as the second leading cause of unintentional deaths. Unintentional drug overdoses include those resulting from illegal, prescription, and over-the-counter drug misuse, abuse, taking too much for medical reasons, and accidental ingestion (such as by a toddler). The most common drug categories involved in drug overdose deaths are prescription opioids, cocaine and heroin.

**Number of Deaths from Unintentional Injuries in the United States,
by Top Three Causes, 1999-2007**



NOTES: Motor-vehicle traffic deaths include pedestrians, pedal cyclists, or occupants, and involve any type of motor vehicle on public roads.

Drug overdose deaths include accidental poisoning by and exposure to narcotics, hallucinogens, antiepileptics, sedative-hypnotics, antiparkinsonisms, psychotropics, nonopioid analgesics, antipyretics, antirheumatics, other drugs acting on the autonomic nervous system, and other and unspecified drugs, medicaments, and biological substances (ICD-10 codes X40-X44).

Mortality data prior to 1999 cannot be compared with data from 1999 and after due to significant changes in the coding of mortality data in 1999.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC), *Unintentional Drug Poisoning in the United States*, 2010 (available online at <http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/pdf/poison-issue-brief.pdf>); and CDC, NCIPC, Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS), accessed 5/17/2011 (available online at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/WISQARS>).