

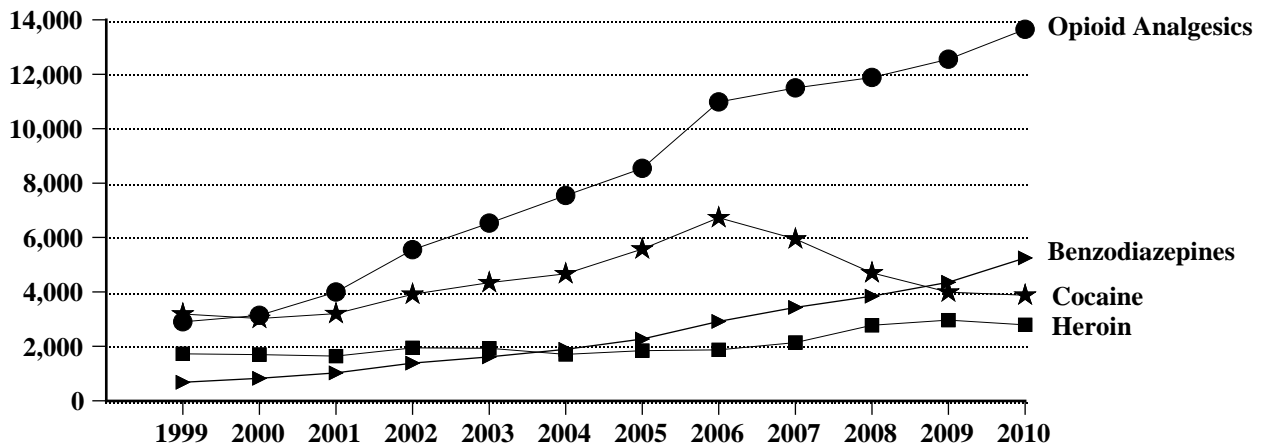
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

Number of Unintentional Opioid Analgesic Deaths Continue to Increase; Benzodiazepine-Related Unintentional Deaths Now Surpass Cocaine

The number of opioid analgesic deaths in the United States has been steadily increasing since 1999, according to data from the CDC's National Vital Statistics System. There were 2,901 unintentional drug deaths involving opioid analgesics in 1999, compared to 13,652 in 2010 (the most recent year for which data are available). There were more than three times as many deaths in 2010 involving opioid analgesics than deaths involving cocaine, and nearly five times as many than those involving heroin. Benzodiazepine-related unintentional deaths have also been increasing steadily since 1999, and are responsible for more unintentional drug overdose deaths in the United States than either cocaine or heroin. Unintentional drug overdoses deaths are the second leading cause of all unintentional deaths in the U.S., after motor vehicle-related deaths (see *CESAR FAX*, Volume 22, Issue 15).

Top Four Drugs Involved in U.S. Unintentional Drug Overdose Deaths (Opioid Analgesics, Benzodiazepines, Cocaine, and Heroin), 1999-2010



NOTES: Data are from the Multiple Cause of Death 1999-2010 file, which is based on death certificates submitted by medical examiners or coroners. 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). Opioid analgesics are categorized as methadone (ICD-10 code T40.3), other opioids (T40.2), and other synthetic narcotics (T40.4). 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 Health Statistics, *Multiple Cause of Death 1999-2010* on CDC WONDER Online Database, released 2012. Accessed at <http://wonder.cdcx.gov/mcd-icd10.html> on April 12, 2013.