

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

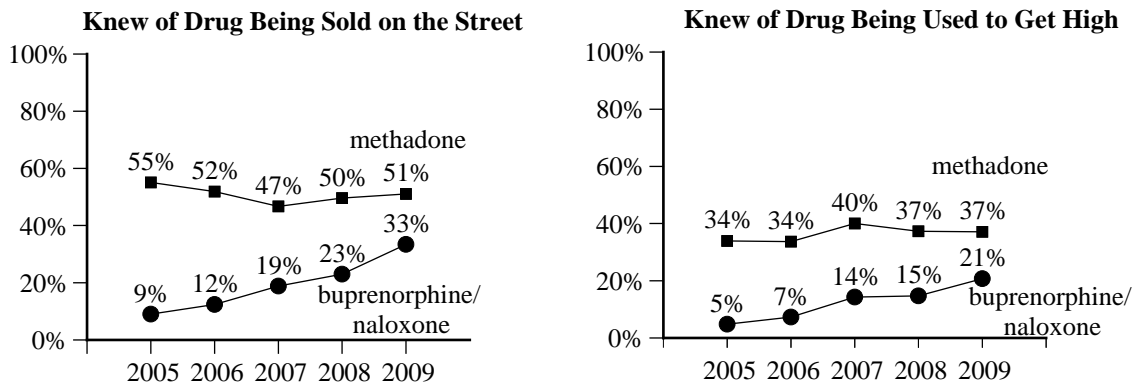
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One-Third of U.S. Treatment Applicants Report Buprenorphine/Naloxone Sold on Street; One-Fifth Report the Drug Is Used to Get High

“Diversion and abuse of buprenorphine/naloxone have steadily increased since 2005 through 2009,” according to data from a national post-marketing surveillance program* funded by the manufacturer. One of the indicators of diversion and abuse utilized by the surveillance program is a survey of nearly 19,000 applicants to 86 substance abuse treatment programs in 30 states. Both the percentage of applicants who reported knowing that buprenorphine/naloxone, which has been approved for opioid therapy since 2002, was sold on the street and those that reported knowing that the drug was used to get high increased from 2005 to 2009, reaching 33% and 21%, respectively. In comparison, the percentage who reported that methadone, which has been used since the 1950s for opioid therapy, was sold on the street or used to get high has remained relatively stable over the past three years (see figure below). The authors note that “the increases in diversion and abuse measures indicate the need to take active attempts to curb diversion and abuse as well as continuous monitoring and surveillance of all buprenorphine products” (p. 190).

Percentage of Applicants to U.S. Treatment Programs Who Knew of Methadone and Buprenorphine/Naloxone Being Sold on the Street or Being Used to Get High, 2005-2009

(n=18,956 from 2005 to 2009)



*Conducted for Reckitt Benckiser Pharmaceuticals by an independent contractor, the Surveillance of Diversion and Abuse of Therapeutic Agents (SODATA) utilizes several national indicators of diversion and abuse combined with a survey of applicants to substance abuse treatment programs and a survey of CSAT-certified physicians.

**Surveys were conducted at 86 treatment programs (both providing and not providing pharmacotherapy) from 30 states providing a total of 18,956 completed surveys from 2005 to 2009. While the treatment applicant survey was not a probability sample, the demographic characteristics of the applicant sample were similar to that of the national census of publicly-funded treatment admissions. The applicant survey does not estimate either the incidence or the prevalence of diversion/abuse, but it is an indication of changes in perception of diversion/abuse among a population likely to be knowledgeable about illegal markets through their own experiences, that of others, and direct observations.

See Wish, ED, Artigiani, E, Billing, A, Hauser, W, Hemberg, J, Shilet, M, and DuPont, R, “The Emerging Buprenorphine Epidemic in the United States,” *Journal of Addictive Diseases* 31(1):3-7, 2012 for more information on buprenorphine diversion and abuse.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Johanson, C-E; Arfken, C. L.; di Menza, S.; and Schuster, C. R., “Diversion and Abuse of Buprenorphine: Findings from National Surveys of Treatment Patients and Physicians,” *Journal of Drug and Alcohol Dependence* 120:190-195, 2012. For more information, contact Chris-Ellyn Johanson at cjohans@med.wayne.edu.