

**WHATCOM COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER
1500 NORTH STATE STREET
BELLINGHAM, WA 98225**

2004 ANNUAL REPORT

During 2004 the Whatcom County Medical Examiner's office assumed jurisdiction on 111 death investigations that involved forensic autopsies, toxicological examinations, viewing and summary reporting. In addition, 171 other additional cases were reported and investigated and no jurisdiction was assumed (NJA). Medical evidence collected on 55 reported sexual assault cases in Whatcom County was processed by the Medical Examiner's office and summary reports were provided to the involved agencies.

The Medical Examiner also participated in the multi-disciplinary Child Death Review Committee for children under the age of 18. From time to time local agencies also brought miscellaneous bones to the Medical Examiner to determine if they were of human origin.

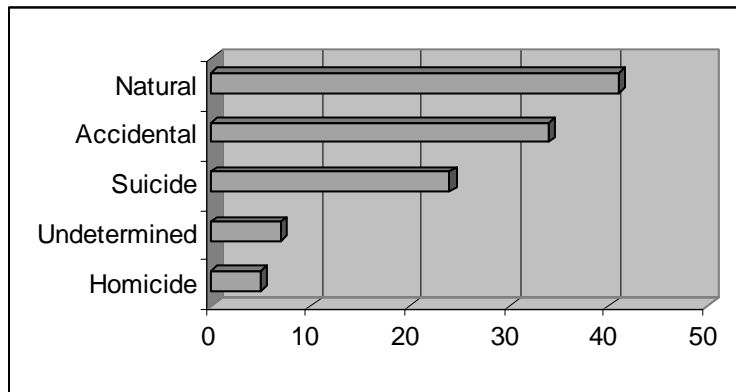
Teaching and public relations are also an important part of the Medical Examiner's office. Consulting was ongoing with the fire and police departments of the county and St. Joseph's Hospital. In addition, college classes toured the morgue facility. Several staff members from the Bellingham Police and Fire Departments and other county agencies were trained on and off site about how the medical examiner's office functions. The Medical Examiner also represented the office on numerous occasions to various civic organizations.

**Gary Goldfogel, MD
Whatcom County Medical Examiner**

MEO Annual Report 2004

During 2004 the Whatcom County Medical Examiner's Office conducted 111 forensic death investigations as stated on the previous page. The following statistics and graphs show the breakdown of the various causes of the deaths and the ages and sex of those who died.

Whatcom County MEO Death Investigations 2004



The causes of death shown in the above table are further broken down and displayed in the following pages.

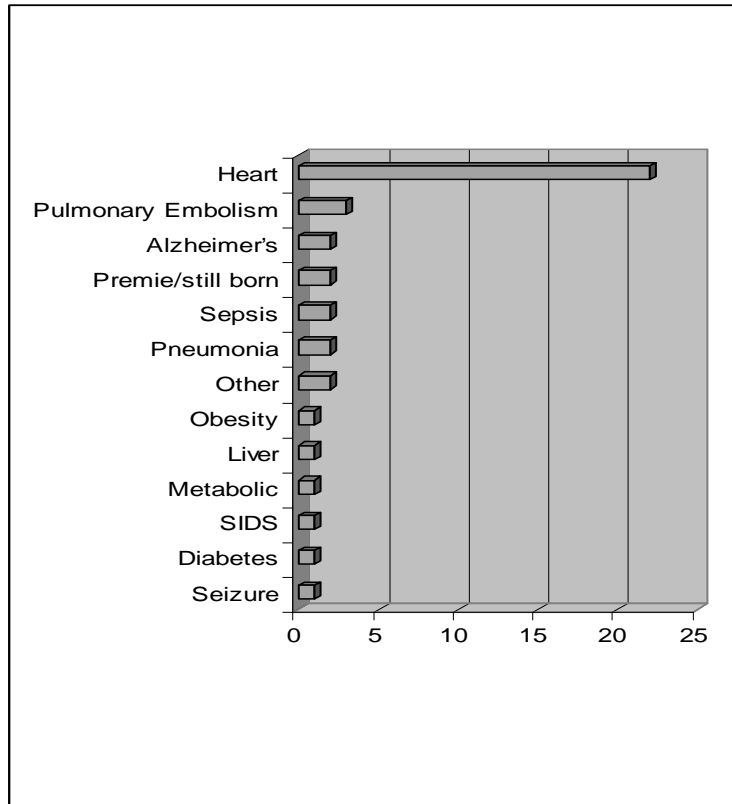
NATURAL:

There were 41 total natural deaths of which 31 were male and 10 female. The cause of death was as follows: Heart (22), Pulmonary embolism (3), Sepsis (2), Alzheimer's (2), Premature/Stillborn (2), Pneumonia (2), Other (2), Seizure (1), Diabetes (1), SIDS (1), Metabolic (1), Liver (1) and Obesity (1).

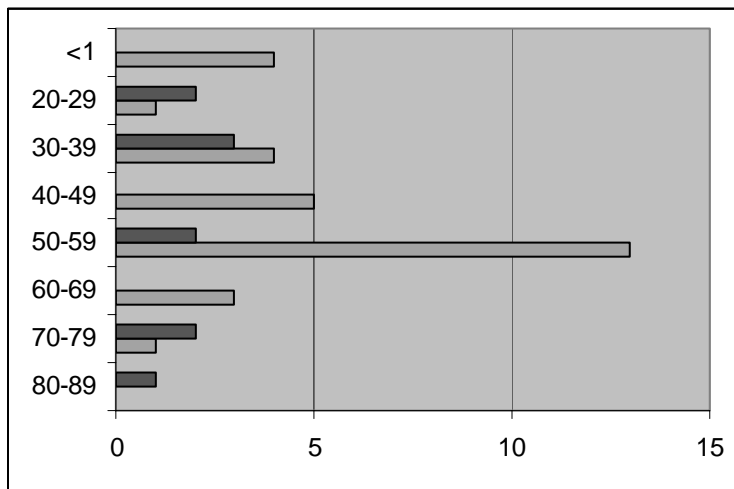
By age, approximately 10% were less than one year old, 7% between 20-29, 17% between 30-39, 12% between 40-49, 37% between 50-59, % between 60-69, 7% between 70-79 and 2% between 80-89 years of age.

Methadone and marijuana were present in 10% of the natural deaths and alcohol in 5%.

Natural Deaths by Cause



Natural Deaths by Age and Sex



*Light bars are male and dark bars are female.

ACCIDENTAL:

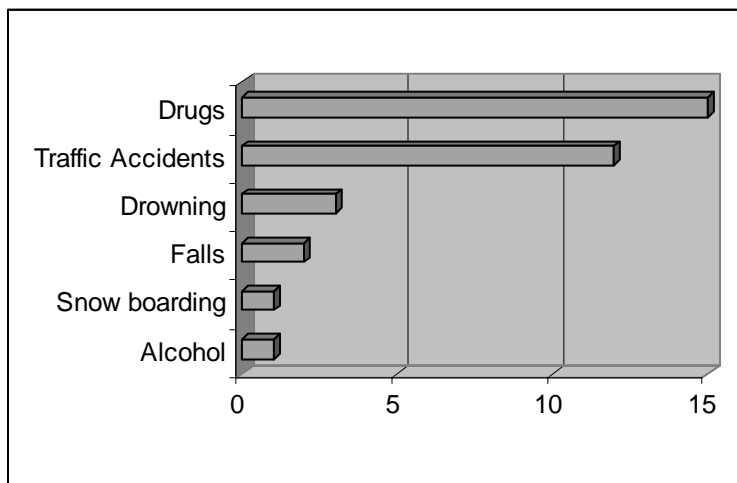
There were 34 total accidental death of which 24 were male and 10 female. The cause of death was as follows: Drug overdose (15), Traffic accidents (12), Drowning (3), Falls (2), Snow boarding (1), and Alcohol (isopropanol) (1).

In the traffic deaths, alcohol was present 83% of the time with an average blood alcohol concentration of 0.19 gm%. Also marijuana was present 16% and cocaine 8% of the time in traffic deaths.

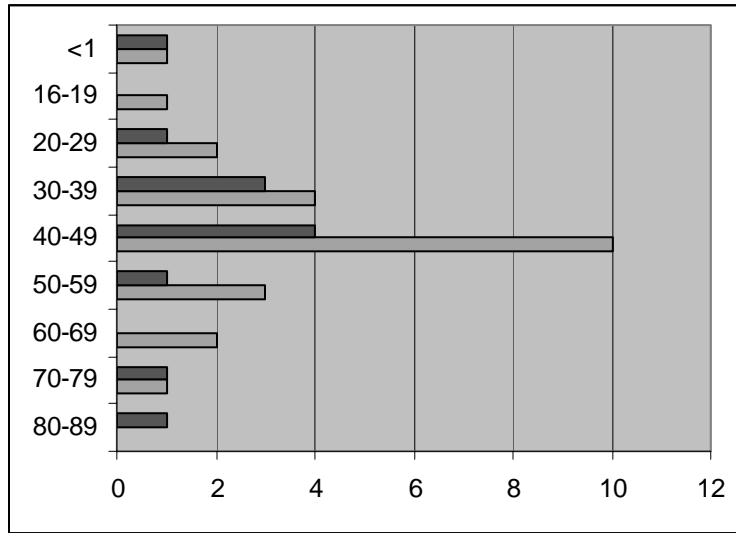
The drowning deaths showed the presence of alcohol 66% of the time with the average blood alcohol concentration at 0.08 gm%. Marijuana and cocaine was present in one of the drownings.

In the drug related accidental deaths the following drugs were present and their percentage of the cases: Marijuana (33%), Cocaine (26%), Heroin (26%), Methadone (26%), Amphetamine/methamphetamine (13%), Oxycodone (13%) and tranquilizers (13%).

Accidental Deaths



Accidental Deaths by Age and Sex



* Light bars are male and dark bars are female.

SUICIDE:

There were 24 total suicide deaths of which 19 were male and 5 female. The cause of death was as follows: Gunshot (13), Drugs (8), Hanging (1), Fall/Jumping (1) and Motor Vehicle Accident (1).

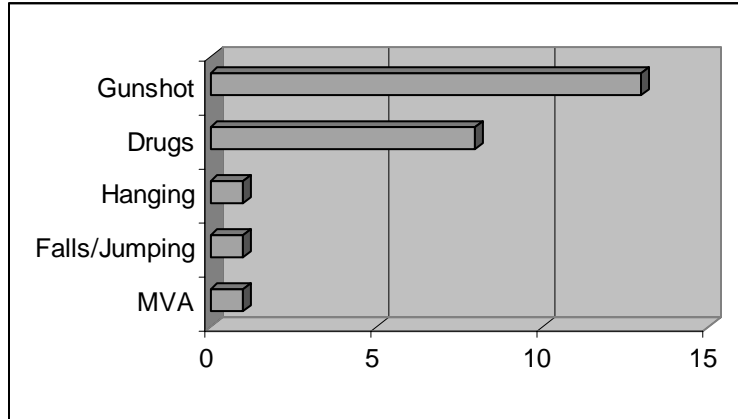
By age, 4% were between the ages of 16-19, 12% between 20-29, 8% between 30-39, 33% between 40-49, 25% between 50-59, 8% between 60-69 and 8% between 70-79.

Alcohol was a factor in 33% of all suicide deaths with an average reading of 0.10 gm%.

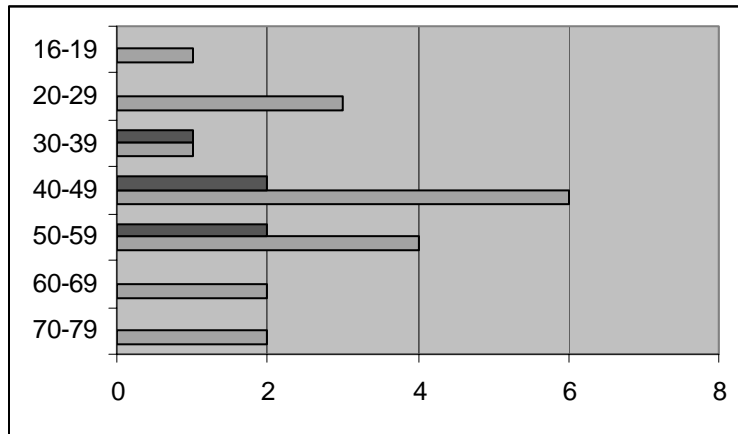
In the gunshot suicides, handguns were used 62% of the time, rifles 15% and shotguns 23%.

In the drug related suicides prescription drugs were used 63% of the time.

Suicide Deaths by Mechanism of Injury



Suicide Deaths by Age and Sex



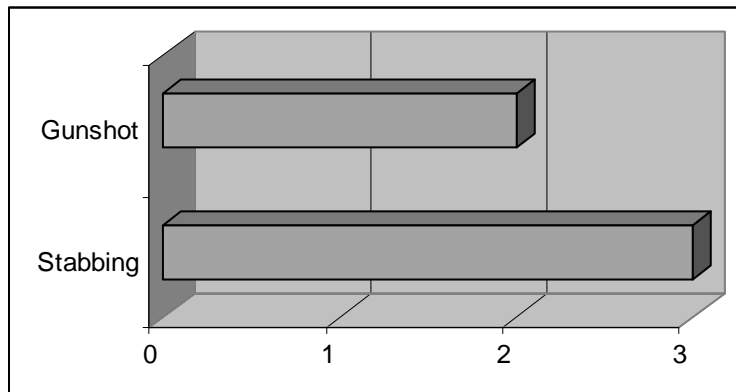
*Light bars are male and dark bars female.

HOMICIDE:

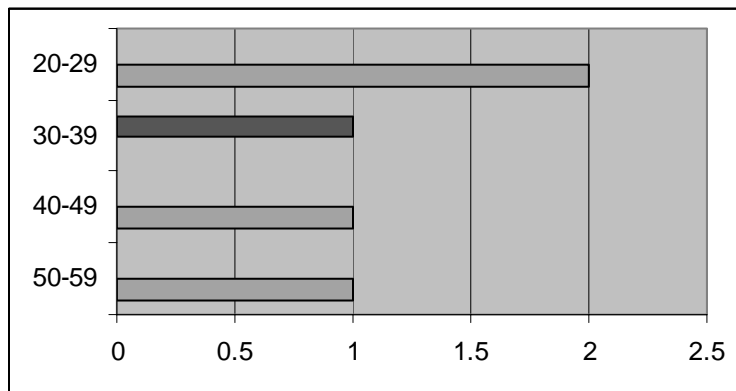
There were five homicide deaths four being male and one female. The cause of death was as follows: Gunshot (2) and Stabbing (3). One of the gunshot deaths was by police and listed as homicide by convention. By age, 40% of all homicides were between 20-29, 20% between 30-39, 20% between 40-49 and 20% between 50-59.

Cocaine was present in 66% of the stabbing deaths and alcohol was present in both of the gunshot cases with an average blood alcohol concentration of 0.15 gm%.

Homicide Deaths by Cause



Homicide Deaths by Age and Sex



*Light bars are male and dark bars female.

UNDETERMINED:

There were seven cases listed as undetermined. One was a full skeleton that was positively identified. One involved consumption of oxycodone and steroids, one drank cleaning solvent and two cases involved children. The children were between two and 10 months of age and one died while sitting in a play swing and the other of a possible airway obstruction.