

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

2012 ANNUAL REPORT

During 2012 the Whatcom County Medical Examiner's office assumed jurisdiction in 104 death investigations that involved forensic autopsies, toxicological examinations, viewing and summary reporting. In addition, 173 other additional cases were reported and investigated and no jurisdiction was assumed (NJA).

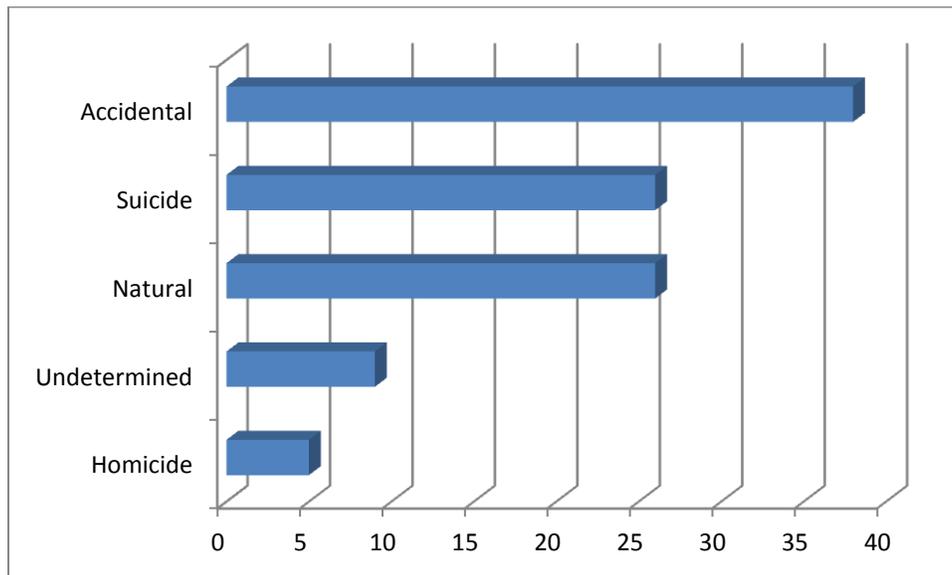
Local agencies brought miscellaneous bones on nine occasions to the Medical Examiner to determine if they were of human origin.

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 and high school classes toured the morgue facility. The Medical Examiner also represented the office on numerous occasions to various civic organizations and gave multiple lectures.

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

During 2012 the Whatcom County Medical Examiner’s Office conducted 104 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 age and sex of those who died.

Whatcom County MEO Death Investigations 2012



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

ACCIDENTAL:

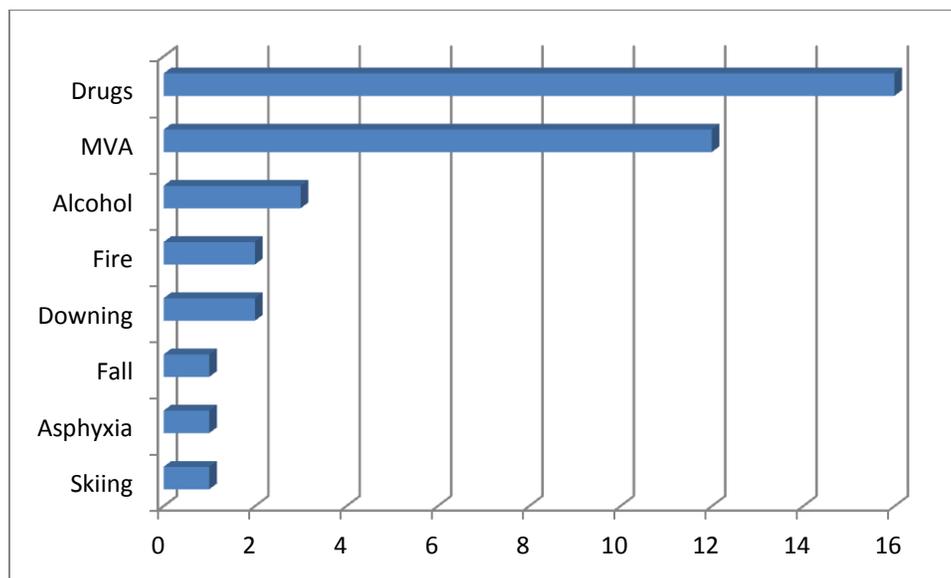
There were 38 total investigated accidental deaths of which 28 were male and 10 female. The cause of death was as follows: Drugs (16), Traffic (12), Drowning (2) Alcohol (3), Fire (2), Fall (1), Asphyxia (1) and Skiing (1).

By age, approximately 5% were less than one, 2% between 1-5, 2% between 6-10, 2% between 11-15, 5% between 16-19, 21% between 20-29, 18% between 30-39, 15% between 40-49, 10% between 50-59, 10% between 60-69, 5% between 70-79 and 5% between 80-89 years of age.

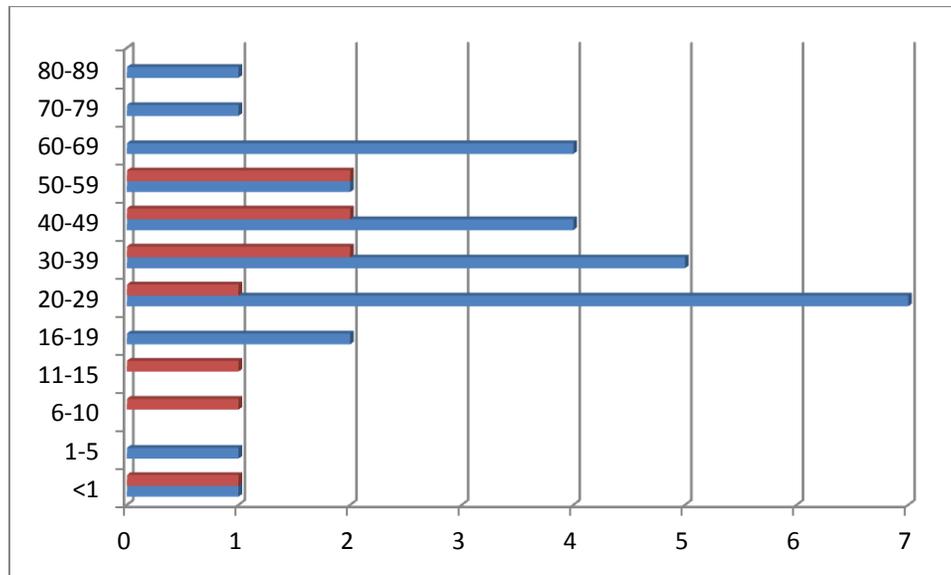
In the 12 traffic deaths, alcohol was present 16% of the time with an average blood alcohol concentration of 0.16 gm%. Seatbelts were not worn in 45% of the automobile deaths. Helmets were worn in all three motorcycle deaths. In the traffic deaths, marijuana was found twice, opiates twice, methamphetamine once and benzodiazepines once. Interestingly, one of the traffic deaths was attributed to internal injuries suffered years and years ago but undetected at that time.

In the 16 drug overdose deaths, heroin was present 63% of the time, methamphetamine 25%, methadone 13%, cocaine 13% benzodiazepines 6% and other drugs 13% of the time.

Accidental Deaths



Accidental Deaths by Age and Sex



* Blue bars are male and red bars are female.

SUICIDE:

There were 26 total investigated suicide deaths of which 22 were male and 4 female. The cause of death was as follows: Gunshot (12), Hanging (7), Drugs (3), Drowning (2), Asphyxia (1), Jumping/Fall (1).

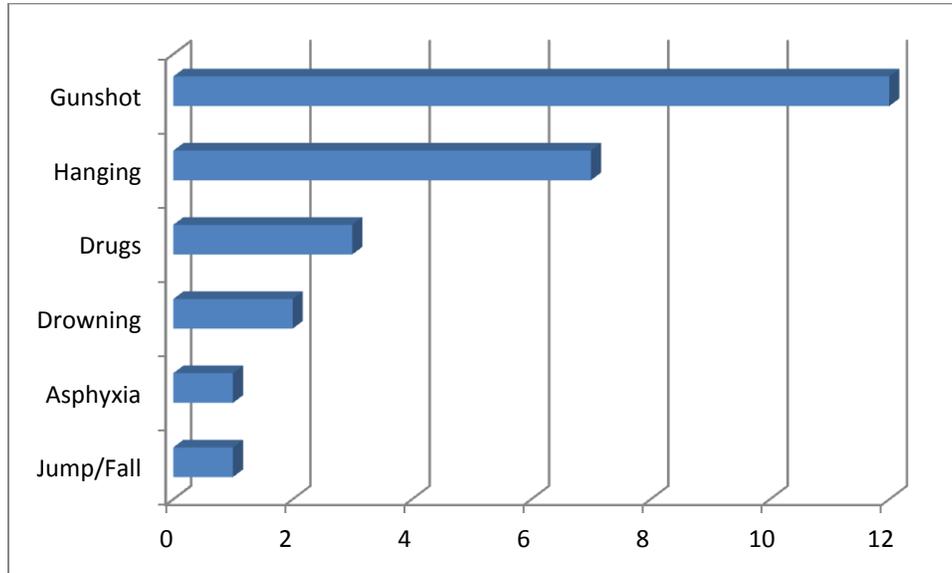
By age, approximately 4% were between 11-15, 4% between 16-19, 31% between 20-29, 15% between 30-39, 15% between 40-49, 19% between 50-59 and 12% between 60-69 years of age.

Alcohol was present in 35% of all suicide deaths with an average blood alcohol reading of 0.14 gm%.

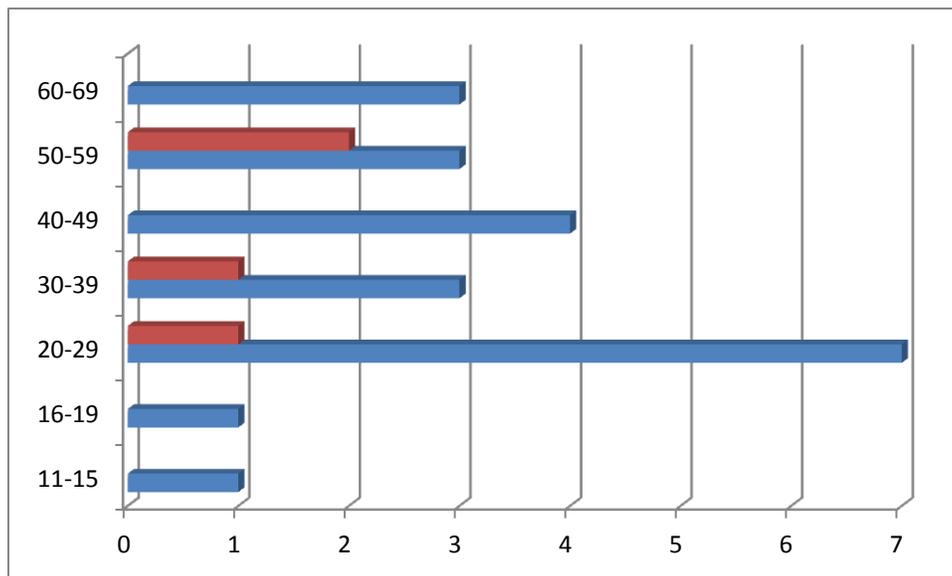
In the three drug overdose deaths, benzodiazepines, tricyclic antidepressants venlafaxine and amphetamine were present.

In the 12 gunshot suicides, handguns were used 75% of the time and shotguns 25%. Alcohol was present in 50% of the gunshot victims with an average reading of 0.08 gm%. Drugs were present 25% of the time and included methadone, benzodiazepines, antidepressants and marijuana.

Suicide Deaths by Mechanism of Injury



Suicide Deaths by Age and Sex



*Blue bars are male and red bars female.

NATURAL:

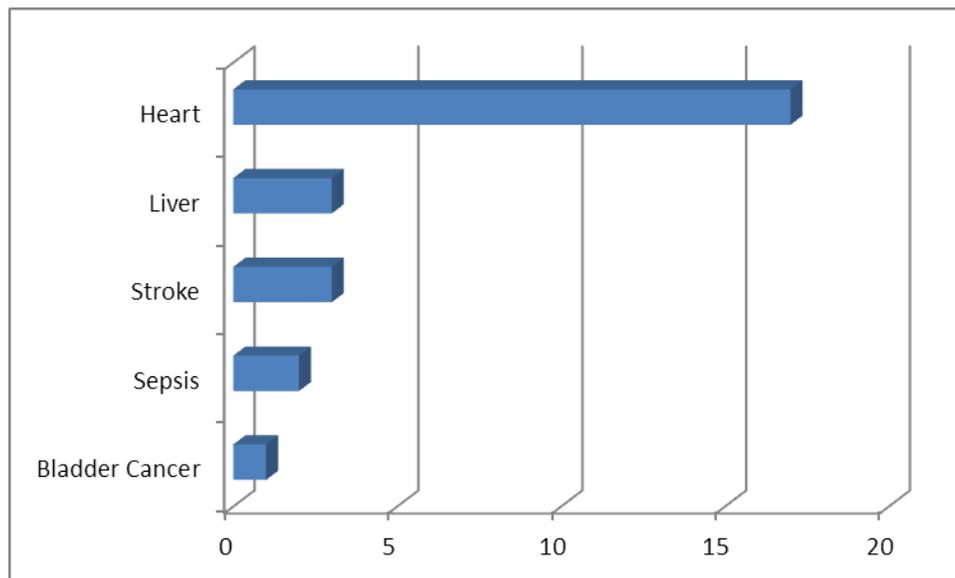
There were 26 total investigated natural deaths of which 15 were male and 11 female. The cause of death was as follows: Heart (17), Stroke (3), Liver (3), Sepsis (2) and bladder cancer (1)

Alcohol was present in just one case with a low reading.

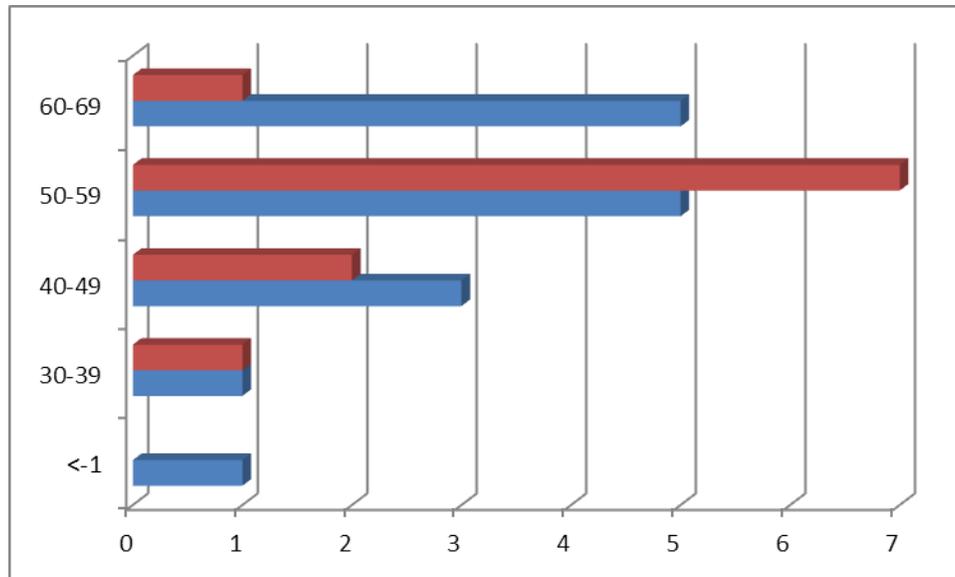
Drugs were present in 27% of the cases and included benzodiazepines, opiates, antidepressants and marijuana (8%).

By age, approximately 4% were less than one year old, 8% between 30-39, 19% between 40-49, 46% between 50-59 and 23% between 60-69 years of age.

Natural Deaths by Cause



Natural Deaths by Age and Sex



*Blue bars are male and red bars are female.

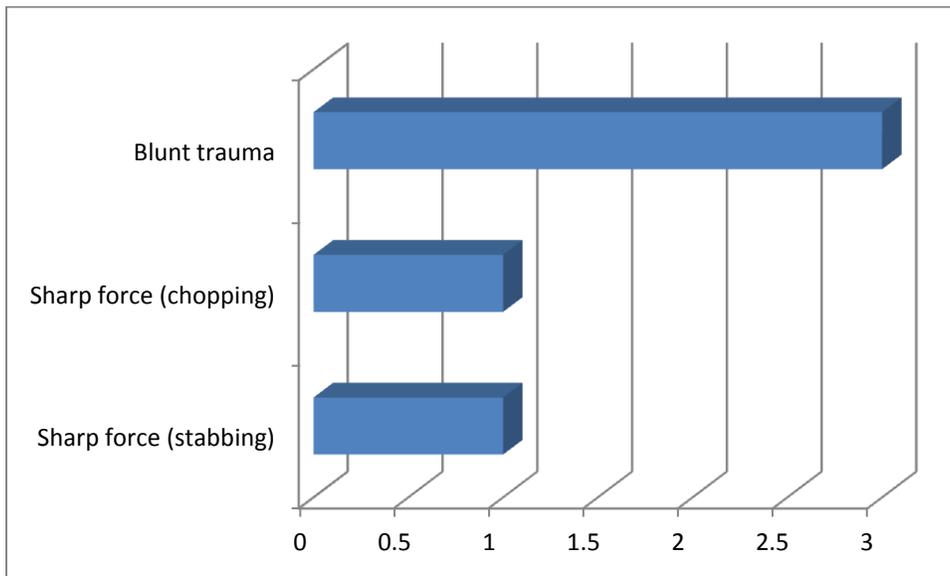
HOMICIDE:

There were five homicide cases, four male and one female. Three were by blunt trauma, one by axe wounds and one by stabbing. There was no alcohol present in any of the victims.

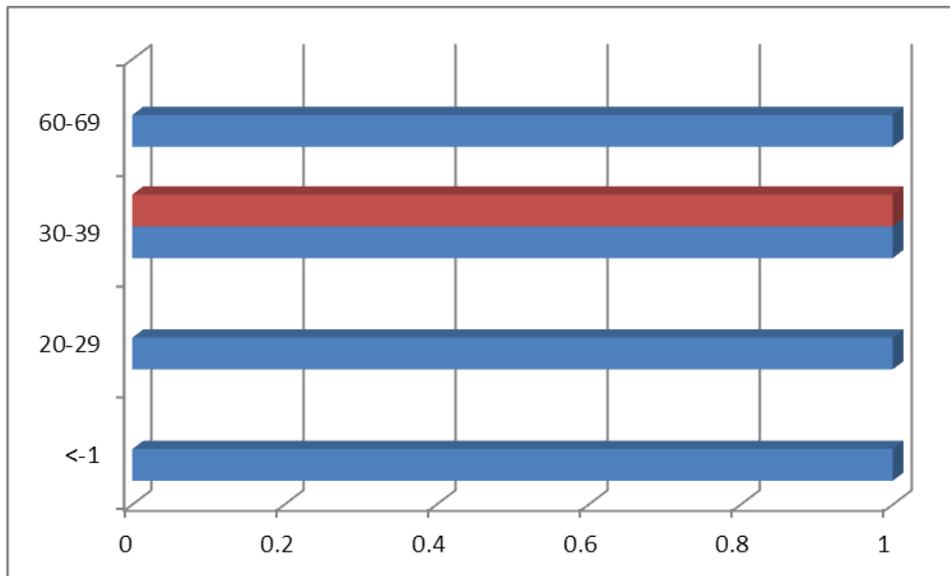
One of the cases involved an exhumation in Whatcom county for a 1985 Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office homicide case.

By age, approximately 20% were less than one year of age, 20% were between 20-29, 40% between 30-39 and 20% between 60-69 years of age.

Homicide Deaths by Mechanism of Injury



Homicide Deaths by Age and Sex



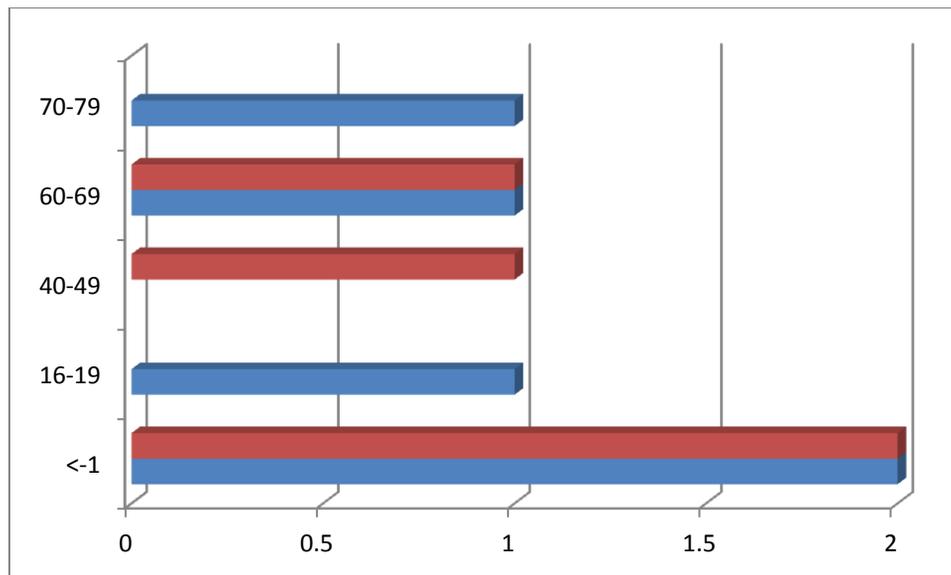
*Blue bars are male and red bars are female.

UNDETERMINED:

There were nine investigated deaths whose manner of death was listed as undetermined. Four were Sudden Unexplained Infant Deaths (SUID). One was a drowning case where it could not be determined if it was accidental or a suicide. Two were transients, one found in a local stream and the other in a wooded area, and it was unclear if the deaths were natural or accidental. One was a residential fire victim and the issue was whether it was an accidental fire or a suicidal act. One was a body hidden from law enforcement and it could not be determined if it was a natural death or as the result of homicidal violence.

By age, approximately 44% were less than one year of age, 11% between 16-19, 11% between 40-49, 22% between 60-69 and 11% between 70-79 years of age.

Undetermined Deaths by Age and Sex



*Blue bars are male and red bars are female