

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

2006 ANNUAL REPORT

During 2006 the Whatcom County Medical Examiner's office assumed jurisdiction in 116 death investigations that involved forensic autopsies, toxicological examinations, viewing and summary reporting. In addition, 130 other additional cases were reported and investigated and no jurisdiction was assumed (NJA). Medical evidence collected on 60 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 deaths of 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.

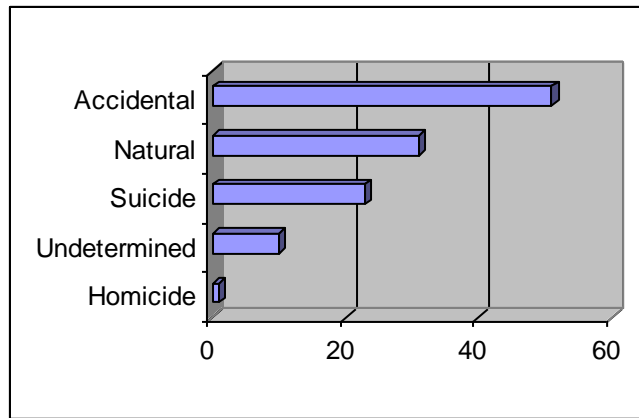
Teaching and public relations are also an important part of the Medical Examiner's office. Consulting was ongoing with the fire and police departments of the county and St. Joseph's Hospital. In addition, college and high school classes toured the morgue facility. The Medical Examiner also represented the office on numerous occasions to various civic organizations.

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

MEO Annual Report 2006

During 2006 the Whatcom County Medical Examiner's Office conducted 116 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
2006**



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

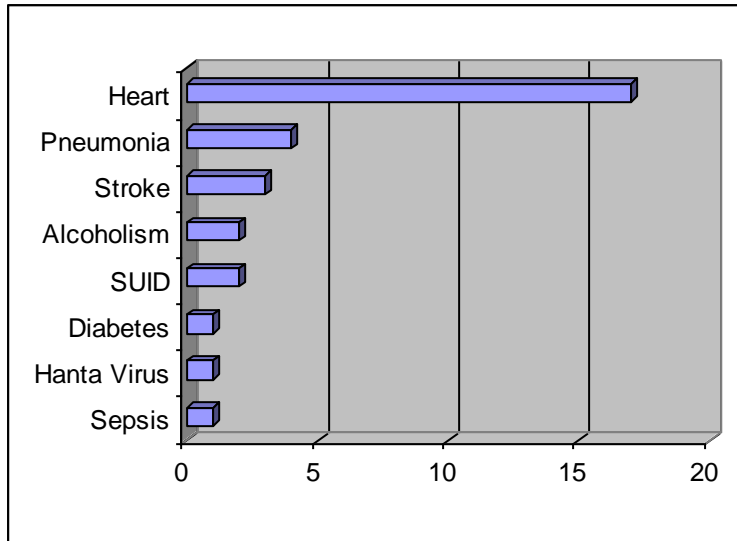
NATURAL:

There were 31 total natural deaths of which 20 were male and 11 female. The cause of death was as follows: Heart (17), Pneumonia (4), Stroke (3), Alcoholism (2), SUID (2), Diabetes (1), Hanta virus (1) and Sepsis (1).

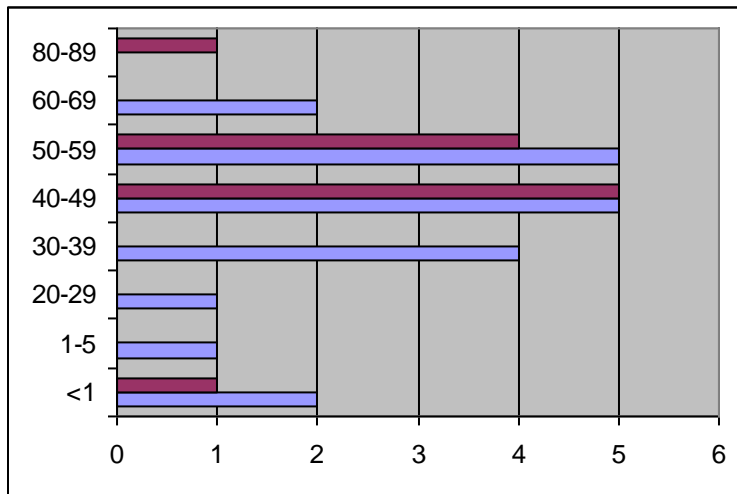
By age, approximately 10% were less than one year old, 3% between 1-5, 3% between 20-29, 13% between 30-39, 32% between 40-49, 29% between 50-59, 6% between 60-69 and 3% between 80-89 years of age.

Marijuana was present in 19% and methadone, amphetamines and cocaine in 22% of the natural deaths.

Natural Deaths by Cause



Natural Deaths by Age and Sex



*Light bars are male and dark bars are female.

ACCIDENTAL:

There were 51 total accidental deaths of which 37 were male and 14 female. The cause of death was as follows: Drugs (17), Traffic accidents (16), Skiing (5), Drowning (5), Fire (2), Falls (2), Airplane (1), Choking (1), Tree fall (1) and Organ necrosis (1).

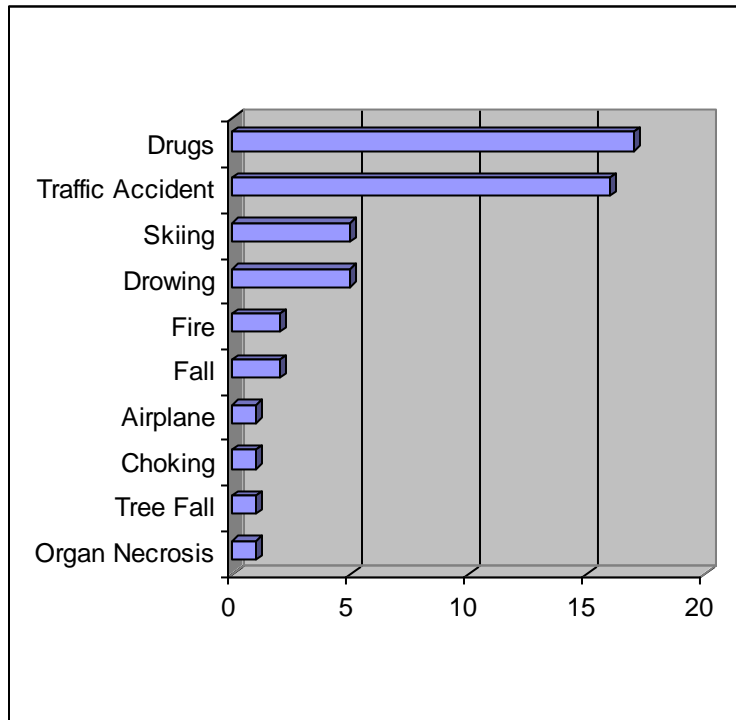
By age, approximately 4% were between 1-5, 2% between 11-15, 8% between 16-19, 24% between 20-29, 18% between 30-39, 24% between 40-49, 16% between 50-59, 4% between 60-69 and 2% between 80-89.

In the traffic deaths, alcohol was present 25% of the time with an average blood alcohol concentration of 0.20 gm%. Also marijuana/methadone/oxycodone were present 18% of the time in traffic deaths. Seatbelts were not worn in 31 % of these deaths. Helmets were worn in both motorcycle deaths.

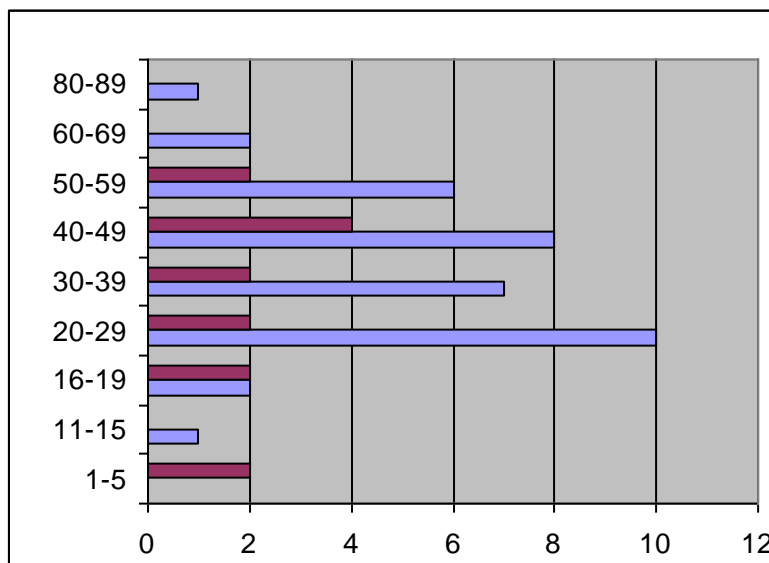
One of the drowning deaths had a blood alcohol of 0.30 gm%.

In drug related accidental deaths the following drugs were present and their percentage of the cases: Methadone (57%), Cocaine (41%), Heroin (41%), Prescription drugs (20%), Amphetamine/methamphetamine (12%) and Fentanyl (12%). Multiple combinations of drugs were present in many of the deaths.

Accidental Deaths



Accidental Deaths by Age and Sex



* Light bars are male and dark bars are female.

SUICIDE:

There were 23 total suicide deaths of which 16 were male and 7 female. The cause of death was as follows: Gunshot (10), Hanging (3), Drugs (3), Carbon monoxide (3), by MVA (2), Asphyxia (1) and Jumping (1).

By age, approximately 4% were between 16-19, 17% between 20-29, 8% between 30-39, 26% between 40-49, 17% between 50-59, 8% between 60-69, 4% between 70-79 and 14% between 80-89.

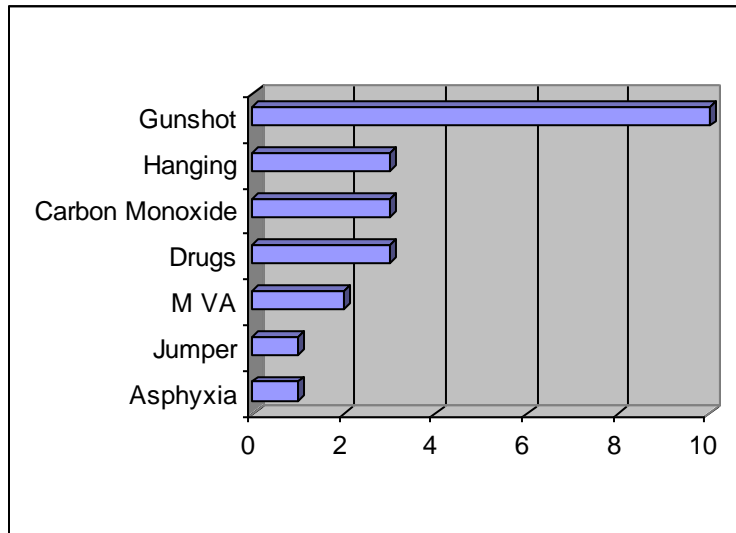
Alcohol was a factor in 35% of all suicide deaths with an average reading of 0.14 gm%.

In the gunshot suicides, handguns were used 90% of the time and a rifle 10%. Illegal drugs were present 30% of the time.

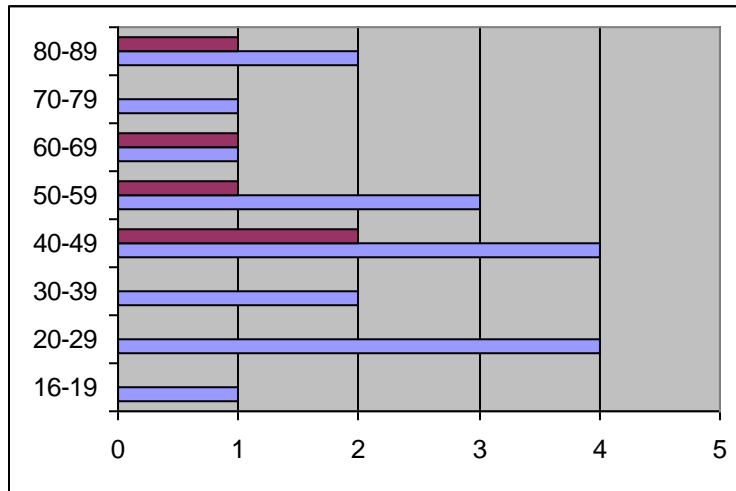
One case involved studying a “How to Commit Suicide” book and placing a plastic bag over the head and breathing helium from a store bought helium tank for party balloons.

In the drug related suicides opiates, cocaine, methamphetamine, methadone and prescription drugs were used.

Suicide Deaths by Mechanism of Injury



Suicide Deaths by Age and Sex



*Light bars are male and dark bars female.

UNDETERMINED:

There were 10 deaths whose manner was listed as undetermined. One was a 50 year old female mental patient (drugs?), one a 55 year old male (cardiac?), one a hanging (suicide vs. accident), two young infants who died at their homes of unknown cause/manner and five cases involving skeletal remains.

HOMICIDE:

There was one homicide case involving death by neglect of an infant female.