

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

**2002 ANNUAL REPORT**

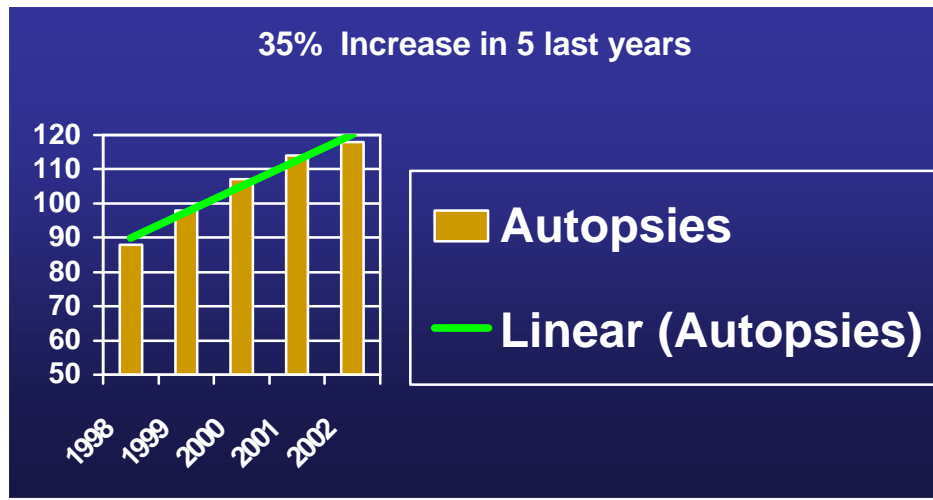
During 2002 the Whatcom County Medical Examiner's office assumed jurisdiction on 118 death investigations that involved forensic autopsies, toxicological examinations, viewing and summary reporting. In addition, 159 additional cases were reported and investigated and no jurisdiction was assumed (NJA). The medical evidence collected on 52 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.

It would appear the autopsy case load is increasing at a significant pace. From 1991 through 1997 the average number of autopsies per year was 83 but from 1998 through 2002 the case load increased to an average of 105 autopsies per year, an increase of nearly 35%. There has also been a 135% increase in the number of sexual assault cases reported in 2002 compared to 1998.





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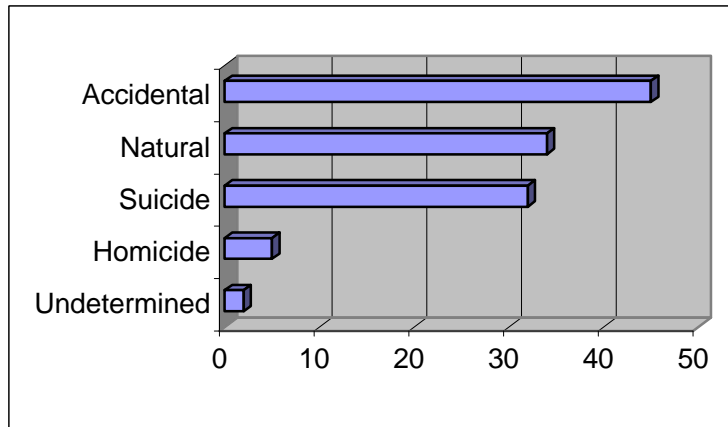
**Gary Goldfogel, M.D.**

**Whatcom County Medical Examiner**

During 2002 the Whatcom County Medical Examiner's Office conducted 118 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 2002



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

#### **ACCIDENTAL:**

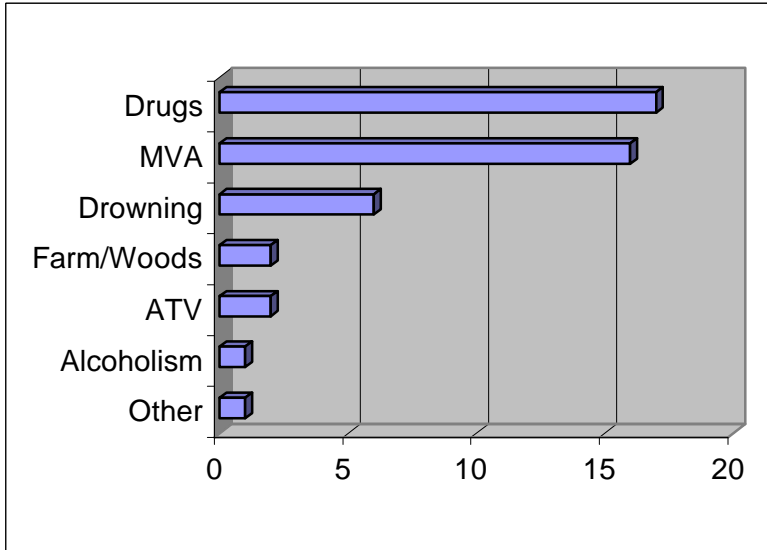
There were 45 total accidental deaths of which 34 were male and 11 female. The cause of death was as follows: Drug overdose (17), Traffic accidents (16), Drowning (6), ATV accidents (2), Farm/woods accidents (2), Alcoholism (1) and other (1).

By age approximately 2% were less than one year old, 2% between 1-5, 2% between 11-15, 7% between 16-19, 13% between 20-29, 22% between 30-39, 30% between 40-49, 9% between 50-59, 4% between 70-79 and 4% between 80-89 years of age.

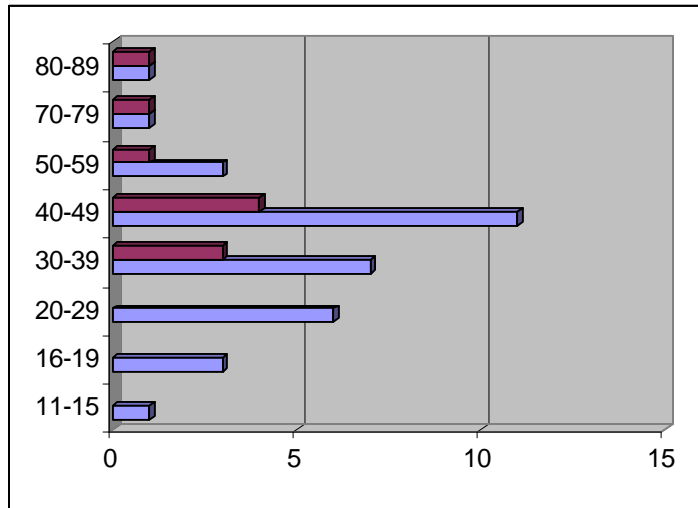
Alcohol was a factor in 24% of all the accidental cases. Of the drug related cases, the following drugs were found: cocaine (53%), opiates (30%) and methadone (18%). In the traffic related cases, 50% of the deceased had

alcohol present with an average reading of 0.25 gm%. These traffic numbers only include those who died whether at fault or an innocent victim.

### Accidental Death Cause



### Accidental Deaths by Age and Sex



\* Light bars are male and dark bars are female

**NATURAL:**

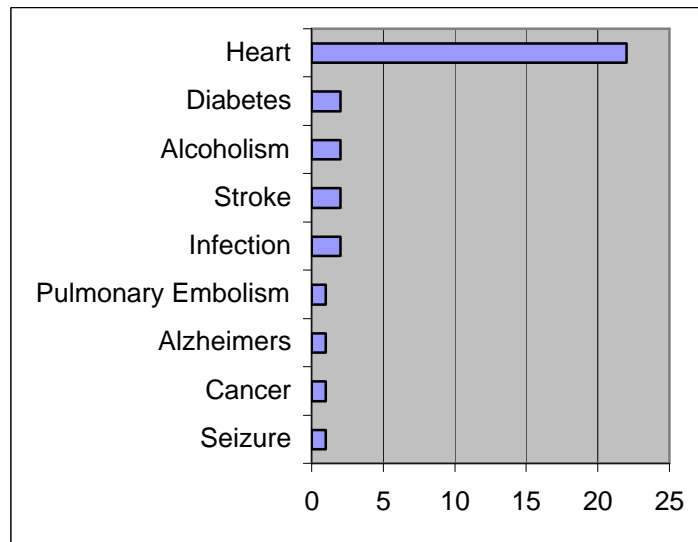
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There were 34 total natural deaths of which 27 were male and 7 female. The cause of death was as follows: Heart related (22 ), Diabetes (2), Alcoholism (2), Stroke (2), Infection (2), Pulmonary embolism (1), Alzheimer's (1), Cancer (1) and Seizure (1)

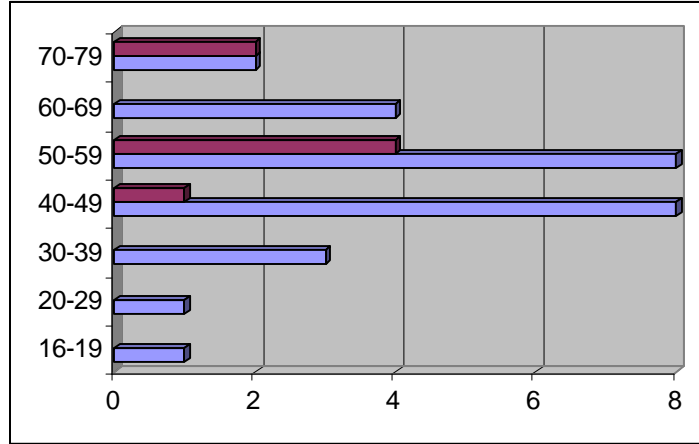
By age approximately 3% were between the ages of 16-19, 3% between 20-29, 9% between 30-39, 26% between 40-49, 27% between 50-59, 12% between 60-69 and 12% between 70-79.

Marijuana was present in 6% of the cases and methadone was present 6% of the time too.

### Natural Deaths by Cause



### Natural Deaths by Age and Sex



\* Light bars are male and dark bars are female

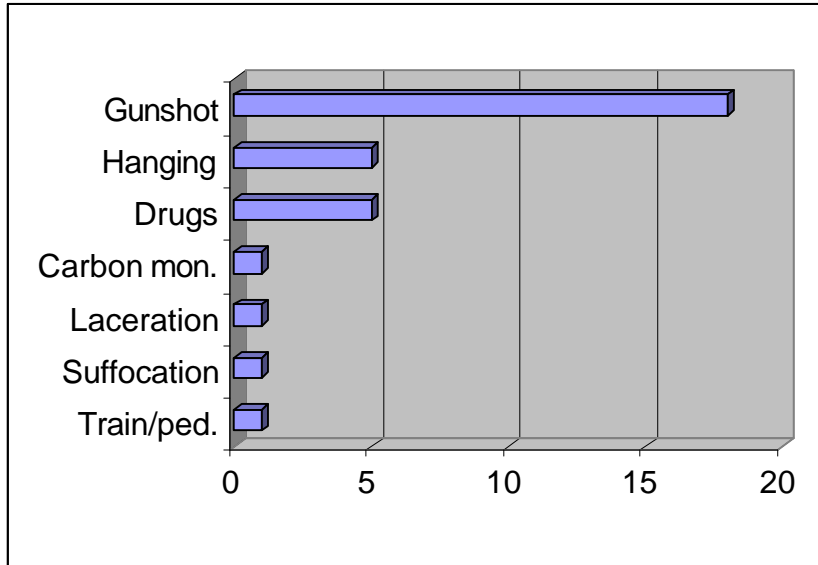
**SUICIDE:**

There were 32 total suicide deaths of which 30 were male and 2 female. The cause of death was as follows: Gunshot (18), Hanging (5), Drugs (5), Carbon monoxide inhalation (1), Laceration (1), Suffocation (1) and laying in front of a train (1)

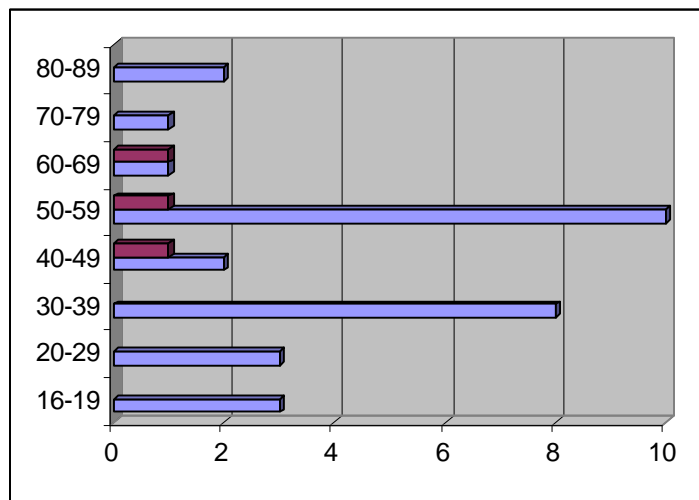
By age, 9% of all suicides were between 16-19, 9% between 20-29, 25% between 30-39, 9% between 40-49, 34% between 50-59, 3% between 60-69, 3% between 70-79 and 6% between 80-89.

Alcohol was a factor in 35% of all suicide deaths with an average reading of 0.13 gm%. Marijuana was present 13% of the time, amphetamines 9% and methadone 6% of the time. Legal prescription drugs were present 18% of the time.

**Suicide Deaths by Cause**



### Suicide Deaths by Age and Sex

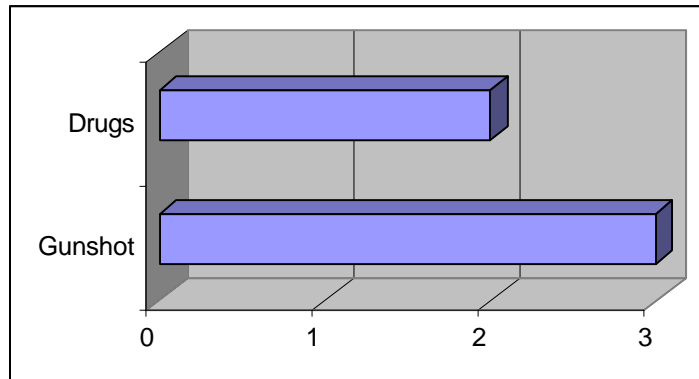


\*Light bars are male and dark bars female

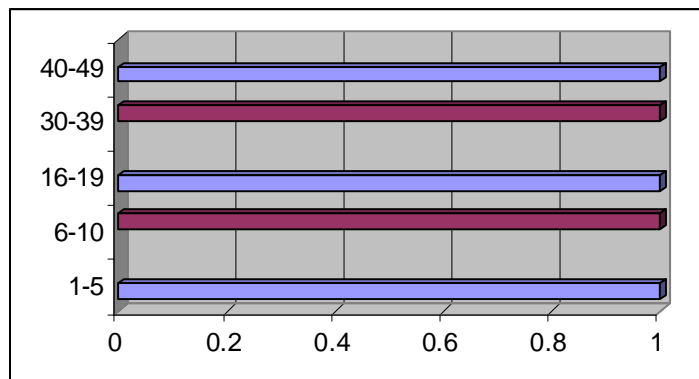
### HOMICIDE:

There were five total homicide deaths of which three were male and two female. The cause of death was as follows: Gunshot (3) and Drugs (2). The drug cases involved the injection of insulin in one and the presence of Oxycodone in a toddler. By age, 20% of all homicides were between 1-5, 20% between 6-10, 20% between 16-19, 20% between 30-39 and 20% between 40-49. One of the homicides was by gunshot wound that occurred outside of the United States in Lebanon and the FBI requested a follow up autopsy once the body was back in their jurisdiction.

### Homicide Deaths by Cause



### Homicide Deaths by Age and Sex



\*Light bars are male and dark bars female

### **UNDETERMINED:**



## **2002 MEO Annual Report**

One case was drug related and another case involved a person laying on train tracts but it could not be determined if the deaths were accidental or suicidal.