

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

**2003 ANNUAL REPORT**

During 2003 the Whatcom County Medical Examiner's office assumed jurisdiction on 113 death investigations that involved forensic autopsies, toxicological examinations, viewing and summary reporting. In addition, 144 additional cases were reported and investigated and no jurisdiction was assumed (NJA). Medical evidence collected on 67 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.

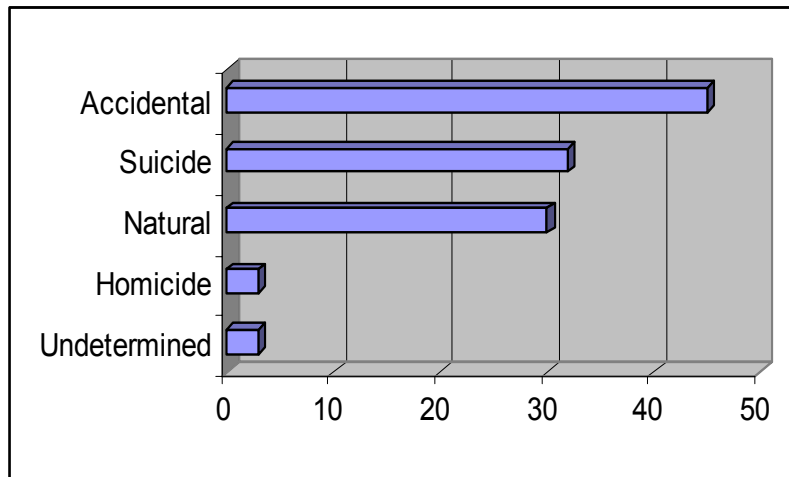
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**Gary Goldfogel, MD**  
**Whatcom County Medical Examiner**

## MEO Annual Report 2003

During 2003 the Whatcom County Medical Examiner's Office conducted 113 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 2003



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

#### **ACCIDENTAL:**

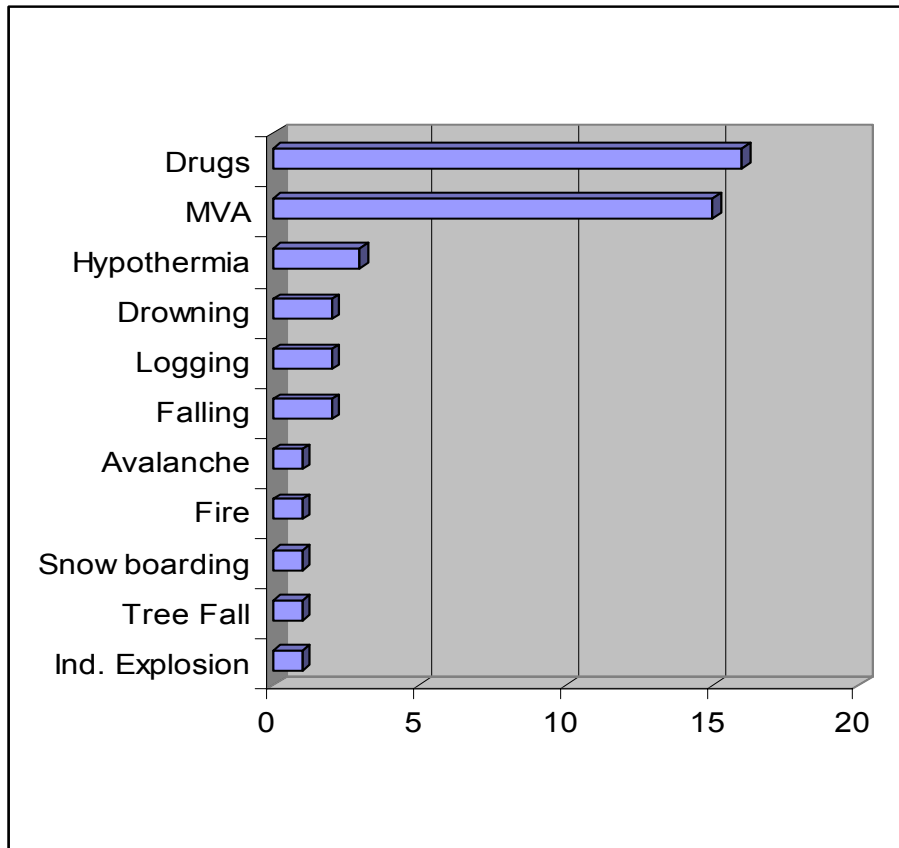
There were 45 total accidental deaths of which 36 were male and 9 female. The cause of death was as follows: Drug overdose (16), Traffic accidents (15), Hypothermia (3), Drowning (2), Falling (2), Logging (2), Avalanche (1), Snowboarding (1), Fire (1), Tree fall (1) and Industrial explosion (1).

By age, approximately 2% were less than one year old, 2% between 1-5, 2% between 11-15, 24% between 20-29, 22% between 30-39, 31% between 40-49, 2% between 50-59, 8% between 60-69 and 4% between 80-89 years of age.

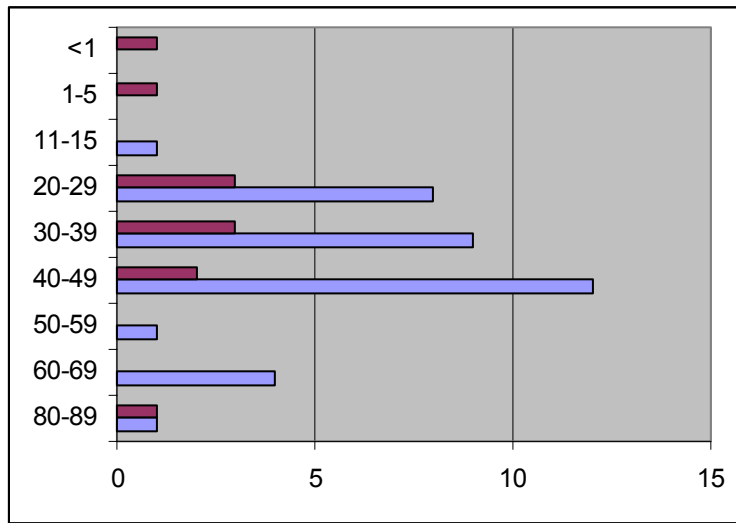
## MEO Annual Report 2003

Alcohol was a factor in 33% of all the accidental deaths. Of the drug related cases, the following drugs were found: cocaine (56%), opiates (43%), methadone (25%), amphetamines (25%) and marijuana (31%). In the traffic related cases, 33% of the deceased had alcohol present with an average reading of 0.20 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

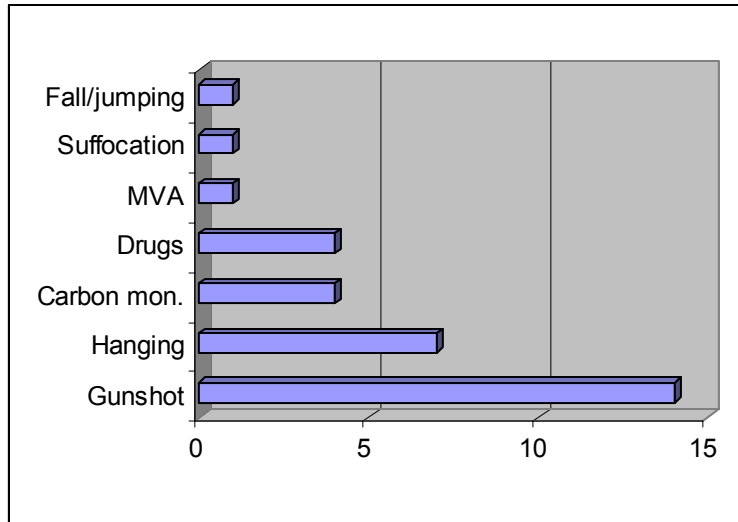
### **SUICIDE:**

There were 32 total suicide deaths of which 27 were male and 5 female. The cause of death was as follows: Gunshot (14), Hanging (7), Carbon monoxide inhalation (4), Drugs (4), Suffocation (1), MVA (1) and Fall/drowning (1).

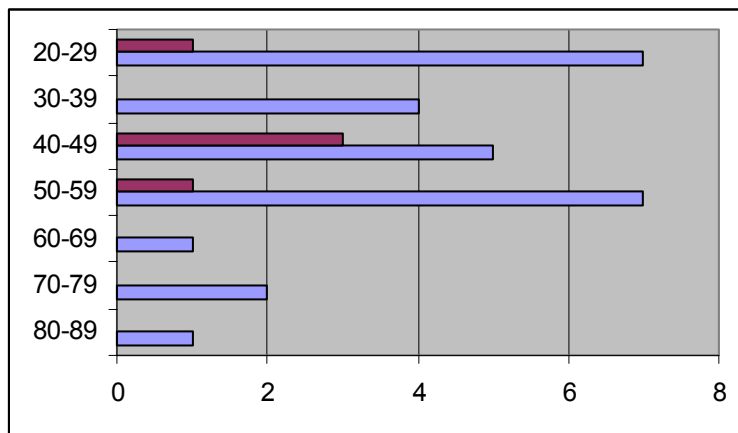
By age, 25% were between the ages of 20-29, 12% between 30-39, 25% between 40-49, 25% between 50-59, 3% between 60-69, 6% between 70-79 and 3% between 80-89.

Alcohol was a factor in 41% of all suicide deaths with an average reading of 0.13 gm%. In the gunshot suicides, handguns were used 71% of the time.

### Suicide Deaths by Cause



### Suicide Deaths by Age and Sex



\*Light bars are male and dark bars female

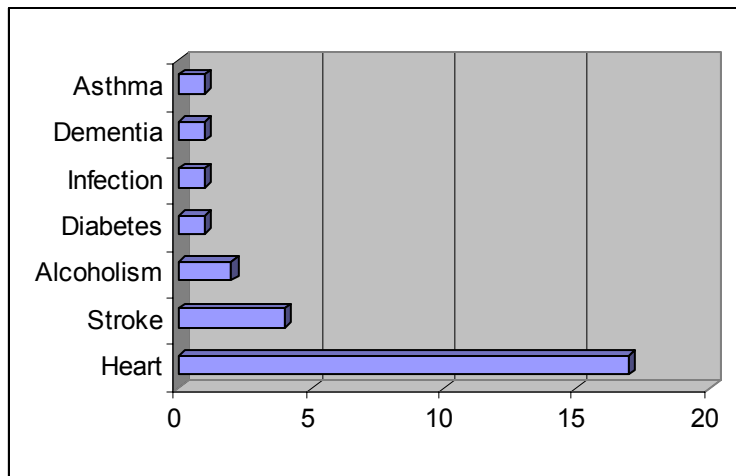
**NATURAL:**

There were 30 total natural deaths of which 24 were male and 6 female. The cause of death was as follows: Heart related (17 ), Stroke (4), Alcoholism (2), Diabetes (1), Infection (1), Pulmonary embolism (1), Dementia (1), Asthma (1) and extensive ancient skull examinations (2)

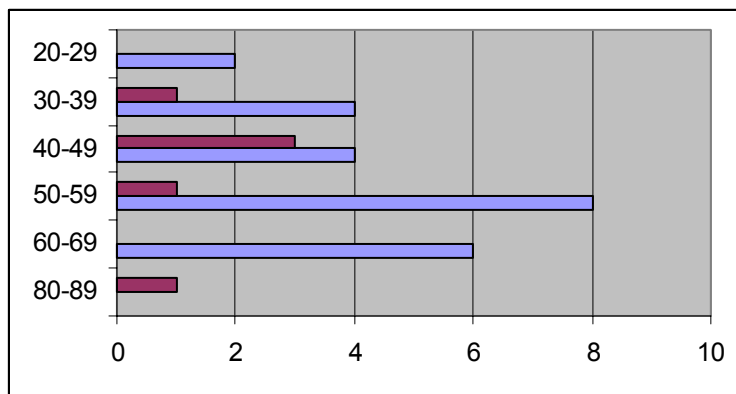
By age, approximately 7% were between the ages of 20-29, 16% between 30-39, 23% between 40-49, 30% between 50-59, 20% between 60-69 and 3% between 80-89.

Marijuana was present in 17% of these cases.

**Natural Deaths by Cause**



**Natural Deaths by Age and Sex**

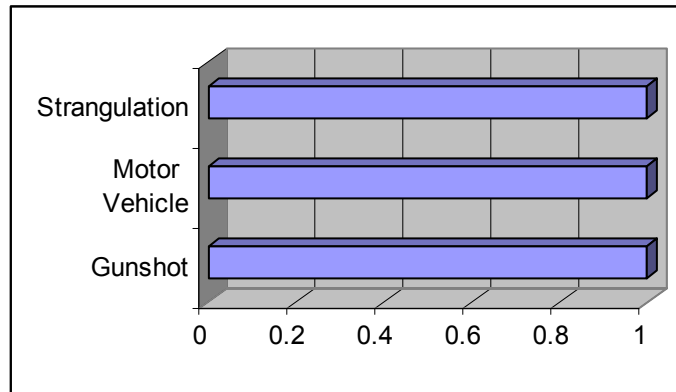


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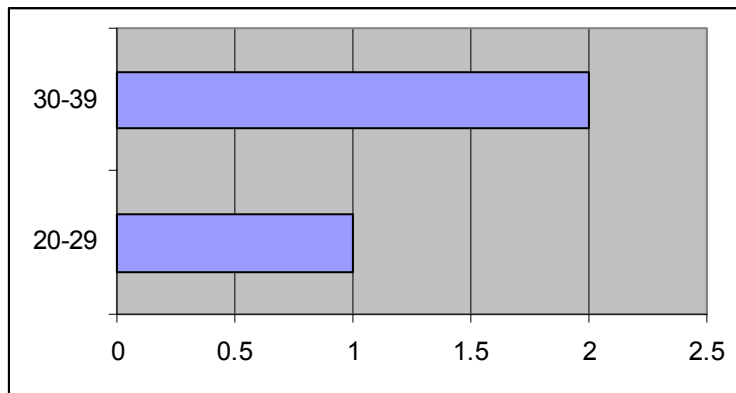
**HOMICIDE:**

There were three homicide deaths and all were male. The cause of death was as follows: Gunshot (1), Strangulation (1) and Motor vehicle (1). By age, 33% of all homicides were between 20-29 and 66% between 30-39.

**Homicide Deaths by Cause**



**Homicide Deaths by Age and Sex**



\*Light bars are male and dark bars female

**UNDETERMINED:**

There were three cases listed as undetermined. Two were a husband and wife that were found dead from a drug overdose but it was not possible to establish manner of death to meet the legal standard of “more probable than not”. An additional case involved an infant with cause of death unknown.