

MEO Annual Report 2007


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

2007 ANNUAL REPORT

During 2007 the Whatcom County Medical Examiner's office assumed jurisdiction in 113 death investigations that involved forensic autopsies, toxicological examinations, viewing and summary reporting. In addition, 184 other additional cases were reported and investigated and no jurisdiction was assumed (NJA). Medical evidence collected on 59 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.

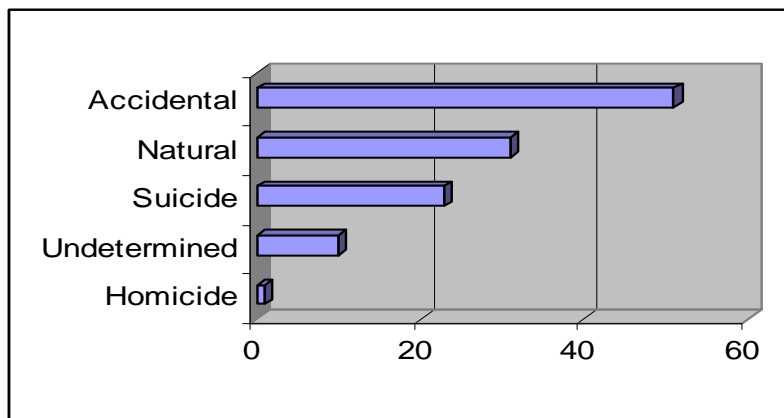

Gary Goldfogel, MD
Whatcom County Medical Examiner

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During 2007 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 2007



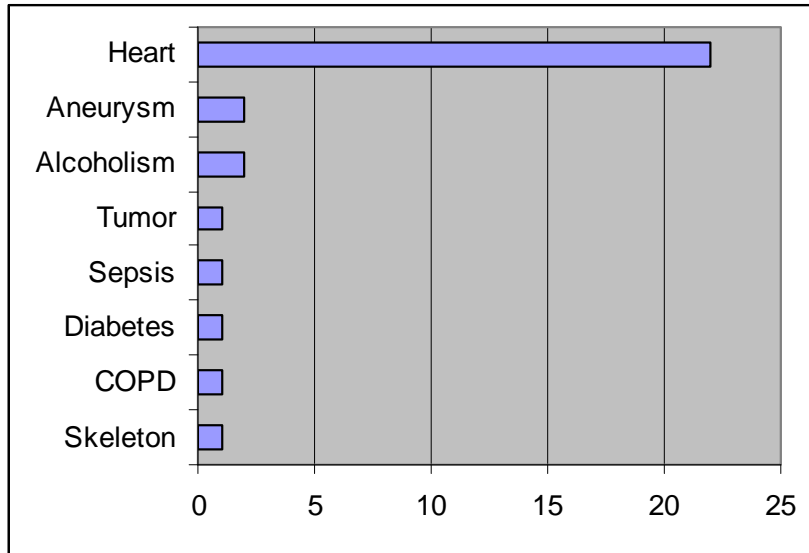
The causes of death shown in the above table are further broken down and displayed in the following pages.

NATURAL:

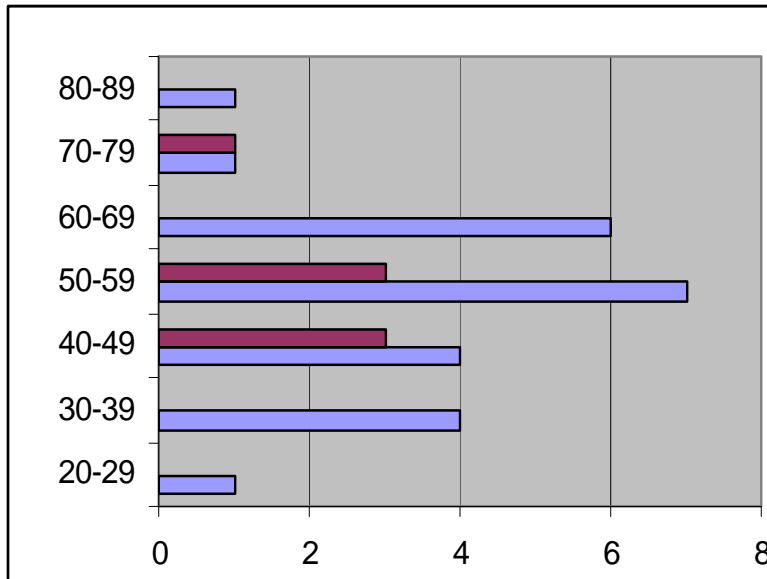
There were 31 total natural deaths of which 24 were male and 7 female. The cause of death was as follows: Heart (22), Stroke (1), Alcoholism (2), Aneurysm (1), Complete skeleton (1), COPD (1), Diabetes (1) Sepsis (1), Tumor (1).

By age, approximately 3% were between 20-29, 13% between 30-39, 22% between 40-49, 32% between 50-59, 19% between 60-69, 6% between 70-79 and 3% between 80-89 years of age.

Natural Deaths by Cause



Natural Deaths by Age and Sex



*Light bars are male and dark bars are female.

ACCIDENTAL:

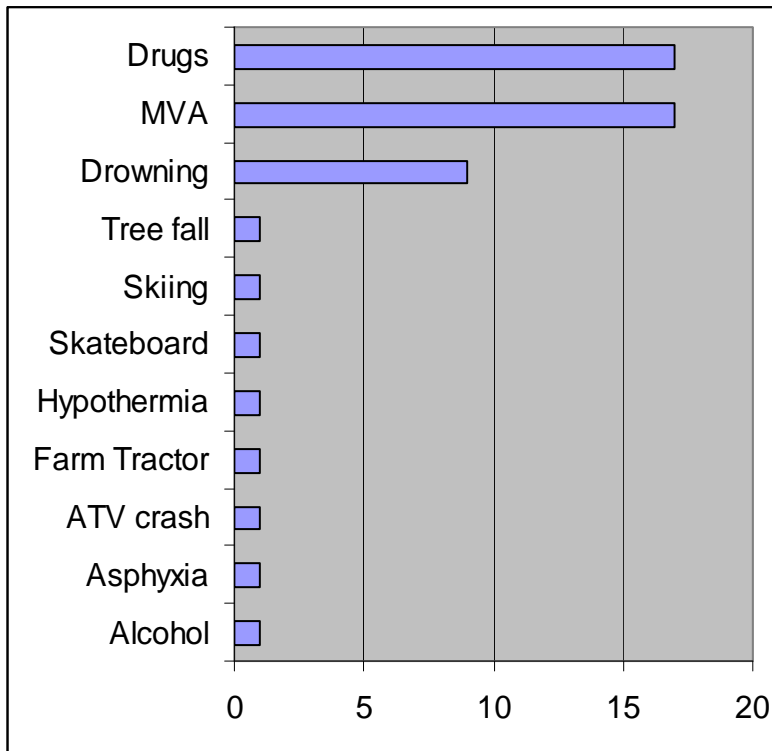
There were 55 total accidental deaths of which 45 were male and 10 female. The cause of death was as follows: Drugs (17), Traffic accidents (17), Drowning (9), Falls (4), Alcohol OD (1), ATV accident (1), Skateboard (1), Skiing (1), Hypothermia (1), Asphyxia (1), Tree fall crush (1), Farm tractor roll over (1).

By age, approximately 1% were less than one year old, 9% between 16-19, 9% between 20-29, 22% between 30-39, 36% between 40-49, 14% between 50-59 and 7% between 60-69.

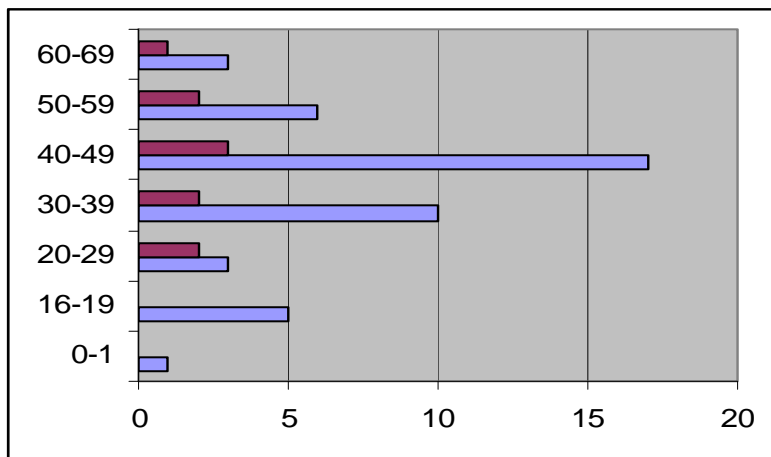
In the traffic deaths, alcohol was present 71% of the time with an average blood alcohol concentration of 0.17 gm%. Seatbelts were not worn in 35% of the deaths. Helmets were worn in one of the two motorcycle deaths.

Alcohol was present in 33% of the drowning deaths with an average 0.14 gm% reading.

Accidental Deaths



Accidental Deaths by Age and Sex



* Light bars are male and dark bars are female.

SUICIDE:

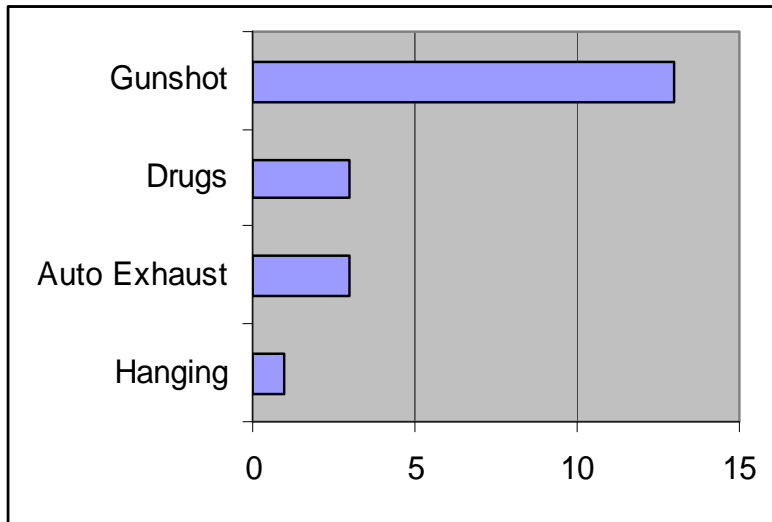
There were 20 total suicide deaths of which 16 were male and 4 female. The cause of death was as follows: Gunshot (13), Drugs (3), Carbon monoxide (3) and Hanging (1).

By age, approximately 2% were between 16-19, 5% between 20-29, 30% between 30-39, 15% between 40-49, 10% between 50-59, 10% between 60-69, 5% between 70-79, 10% between 80-89 and 5% between 90-99.

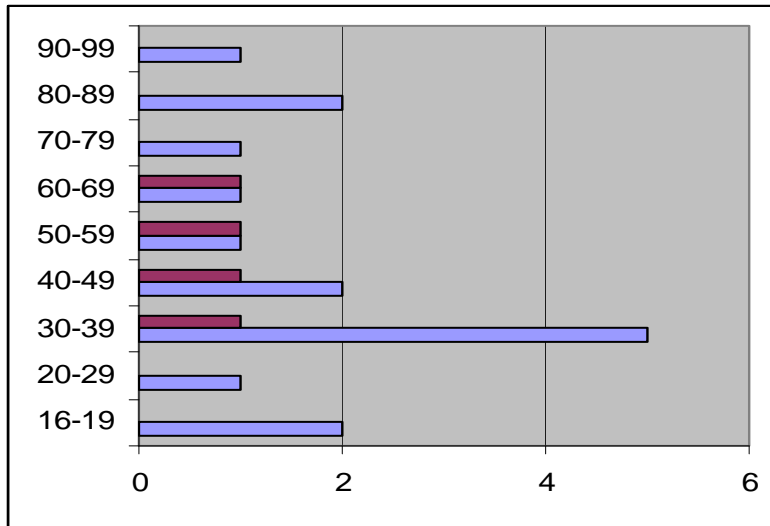
Alcohol was a factor in 40% of all suicide deaths with an average blood alcohol reading of 0.13 gm%.

In the gunshot suicides, handguns were used 54% of the time, shotguns 32%, rifles 7% and a pneumatic nail gun was used once (7%). The average blood alcohol level in gunshot deaths was 0.12 gm%.

Suicide Deaths by Mechanism of Injury



Suicide Deaths by Age and Sex



*Light bars are male and dark bars female.

UNDETERMINED:

There were five deaths whose manner of death was listed as undetermined. Two were infant deaths. One was after ingestion of a fentanyl patch, one with multiple fentanyl patches on his skin and one with methadone and cocaine. It was not possible to determine if the drug related deaths were accidental or suicidal.

HOMICIDE:

There were two homicide cases, one by gunshot (male, 20-29 years old) and one by strangulation (female, 16-19 years old).