

# The Pathology Group, P.C.

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## **FORENSICS 2020 ANNUAL REPORT**

This report provides a summary and statistical analysis of the deaths that underwent autopsy by The Pathology Group, P.C. (TPG) in the year 2020. TPG is a private corporation that performs autopsies and provides other forensic services. Colorado is a “Coroner state” meaning each county elects a Coroner to oversee their counties medicolegal death investigation system.

TPG provides their services to several entities including a large portion of the Coroner’s Offices in Western CO including Garfield (pop. ~60k), Moffat (pop. ~13k), Rio Blanco (pop. ~6k) and Delta (pop. ~30k). Montrose (pop. ~42k) and other counties also may use the services of TPG when their primary pathologist is unavailable.

The Coroner’s Office for each county investigates sudden, unexpected deaths, especially those that occur under violent or suspicious circumstances. Those deaths to be reported to each counties Coroner’s Office include the following:

- From disease which may be hazardous or contagious or which may constitute a threat to the health of the general public
- From external violence, an unexplained cause, or under suspicious circumstances
- Where no physician is in attendance, or where, though in attendance, the physician is unable to certify the cause of death
- From thermal, chemical, or radiation injury
- From criminal abortion
- While in the custody of law enforcement officials or while incarcerated in a public institution
- When the death was sudden and happened to a person who was in good health
- From an industrial accident or any death suspected to involve the decedent’s occupation
- When death occurs in a hospital less than 24 hours after admission to a hospital or after any invasive procedure
- Any death suspected to be due to alcohol intoxication or the result of exposure to drugs or toxic agents
- Any death due to neglect or suspected neglect
- Any stillbirth of 20 or more weeks gestational age unattended by a physician
- Any maternal death to include death of a pregnant woman regardless of the length of the pregnancy, and up to six weeks (or one year) post-delivery, even where the cause of death is unrelated to the pregnancy
- Any death of an infant or child where the medical history has not established a significant pre-existing condition

## **TPG Staff**

Dean Havlik, M.D., Forensic Pathologist (full time pathologist and president of TPG)

Brent Davis, M.D., Forensic Pathologist (part time pathologist who covers for DH)

Chuck Nelson, D-ABMDI, medicolegal death investigator and autopsy technician

Ginger Sprague, autopsy technician

Amber Pruitt, autopsy technician

## **Number of postmortem examinations**

Total examinations: 159

Complete Autopsies: 156

Partial Autopsies: 2

Brain removal only: 1

External Examinations: 0

## **Examinations by pathologists**

Dean Havlik, MD: 156 complete autopsies; 2 partial autopsies; 1 brain removal

Brent Davis, MD: 0 complete autopsies; 0 partial autopsies; 0 brain removals

## **Examinations by county/hospital/private**

Garfield: 70

Moffat: 27

Rio Blanco: 10

Delta: 40

Gunnison: 2

San Miguel: 1

Hospital (Community): 0

Hospital (VA): 3

Private: 6

## **Toxicology**

Toxicology performed in 149 out of 159 cases

Community Hospital: 34

Axis: 114

Community Hospital and Axis: 0

FAA: 1

## **Gender**

Males: 115

Females: 44

**Race**

Caucasian: 141  
 Hispanic: 13  
 Native American: 1  
 Black: 3  
 Unknown: 1

**Age**

0-19 years old: 6  
 20-39 years old: 33  
 40-59 years old: 62  
 60 years old or older: 57  
 Unknown age: 1

In the 0 to 19 years old age group there were 6 deaths, which included 4 males and 2 females. Of these, 1 was a natural death, 1 was a suicide and 4 were accidents. The 1 suicide death was that of an 18 year old male who shot himself in the head. The 4 accidental deaths included 2 blunt force injury related deaths from passengers in motor vehicle collisions, 1 blunt force injury death in a 6 year old male that was run over by a truck that was backing out of a driveway and an intrauterine demise in an approximately 30 week gestational age fetus that had intrauterine exposure to alcohol and illicit drugs. The natural death was that of a 16 year old female who had a heart arrhythmia leading to death.

**Manner of death**

	<b>All deaths</b>	<b>Garfield</b>	<b>Delta</b>	<b>Moffat</b>	<b>Rio Blanco</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Natural</b>	77	30	17	13	6	11
<b>Accident</b>	46	27	8	9	1	1
<b>Suicide</b>	31	12	12	4	3	0
<b>Homicide</b>	4	1	2	1	0	0
<b>Undetermined</b>	1	0	1	0	0	0

**Suicide deaths (31 total deaths)**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Number of deaths</b>
Gunshot/shotgun wounds	14
Drug intoxications	10
Hanging/ligature strangulation	6
Other	1

The following are some general features of the suicide deaths:

- 22 males and 9 females
- Males ranged from 18 to 78 years of age and included the following:
  - Gunshot/shotgun wound – 13 deaths
  - Drug intoxication – 5 deaths
  - Hanging/ligature strangulation - 4 deaths
- Females ranged from 29 to 63 years of age and included the following:
  - Gunshot/shotgun wounds - 1 death
  - Drug intoxication – 5 deaths
  - Hanging – 2 deaths
  - Blunt force injuries after exiting a moving vehicle – 1 death

**Accidental Deaths (46 total deaths)**

Type	Number of deaths
Blunt force injuries	20
Drugs and/or alcohol intoxication	21
Fireworks explosion	1
Hypothermia	1
Sharp force injuries	1
Carbon monoxide poisoning	1
Intrauterine fetal demise after drug exposure	1

Of the blunt force injury deaths, the majority were related to motor vehicles (18 deaths).

**Homicide deaths (4 total deaths)**

- 2 males and 2 females
- Age range of 25 years old to 49 years old
- All 4 deaths due to gunshot wounds

**Natural deaths (77 total deaths)**

Of the 77 natural deaths that underwent postmortem examination, a large portion of the deaths were cardiovascular related (32 deaths). Deaths due to cardiovascular causes include myocardial infarcts (heart attacks), heart arrhythmias, strokes and aneurysms. The next most common natural disease process resulting in death were from complications of chronic alcoholism (19 deaths). There were 11 deaths related to infectious causes (predominantly pneumonia in elderly individuals) with one of these deaths being due to COVID-19 respiratory infection. The remaining deaths were from varying natural disease processes.

**Undetermined deaths (1 total death)**

- Middle aged adult male skeleton found in a remote region in Delta County. The decedent is still unidentified at the time of this report. Complete examination with dental charting, anthropologist evaluation and DNA analysis has been performed. No significant injuries to the bones were identified.

**Additional Information:**

Unidentified bodies: 1

Bodies brought to facility: 359

Organ or tissue donation: 2

Unclaimed bodies: 1 (unidentified body previously mentioned)

Exhumations: 0

Cases referred/consulted not undergoing examination: 35