



THE PATHOLOGY GROUP, P.C.

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FORENSICS 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

This report provides a summary and statistical analysis of the deaths that underwent examination by The Pathology Group, P.C. (TPG) in the year 2021. 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 Colorado including Garfield (pop. ~60k), Moffat (pop. ~13k), Rio Blanco (pop. ~6k), Delta (pop. ~30k), Montrose (pop. ~42k), Ouray (pop. ~5k), Gunnison (pop. ~17k) and San Miguel (pop. ~8k). TPG is also available for private autopsies and autopsies for other counties.

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

Number of postmortem examinations

Total examinations: 252
Complete Autopsies: 249
Partial Autopsies: 0
Brain removal only: 2
Brain and other tissue removal: 1
External Examinations: 0

Examinations by pathologists

Dean Havlik, MD: 236 complete autopsies; 0 partial autopsies; 3 brain/tissue removal
Brent Davis, MD: 13 complete autopsies; 0 partial autopsies; 0 other

Examinations by county/hospital/private

Garfield: 74
Moffat: 27
Rio Blanco: 13
Delta: 53
Montrose: 39
Gunnison: 17
Ouray: 11
San Miguel: 6
Hospital (Community): 2
Hospital (VA): 1
Private: 9

Toxicology

Toxicology performed in 226 out of 252 cases
Community Hospital: 32
Axis: 193
FAA: 1

Gender

Males: 185
Females: 67

Race

Caucasian: 230
Hispanic: 19
Native American: 0
Black: 2
Eastern Indian: 1

Age

0-19 years old: 11

20-39 years old: 60

40-59 years old: 73

60 years old or older: 108

In the 0 to 19 years old age group there were 11 deaths, which included 5 males and 6 females. Of these, 3 were natural deaths, 1 was a suicide, 5 were accidents and 2 were homicides. The 1 suicide death was that of a 19 year old male who shot himself in the head. The 5 accidental deaths included 2 infants who died due to asphyxia as a result of an unsafe sleep environment, a death from an accidental mixed drug intoxication in a 19 year old male, an incident that involved the death of a 6 year old female that fell from a long height from an amusement park ride and the death of an 18 month old female from hypothermia who was stranded with her mother for an extended period in the cold temperatures outdoors. For the natural deaths, there were 2 intrauterine fetal demise deaths and a death of a 3 year old female that died from complications of a congenital diaphragmatic hernia. The two homicides in this age group were from the same incident that involved the stabbing of an 18 year old male and an 11 year old female.

Manner of death

	All	Garfield	Delta	Montrose	Moffat	Rio Blanco	Gunnison	Ouray	San Miguel	Hosp/VA/Pvt
Natural	105	22	23	13	12	7	8	4	4	12
Accident	83	33	14	9	9	4	7	6	1	0
Suicide	51	14	11	16	5	2	1	1	1	0
Homicide	9	4	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Undet.	4	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0

Suicide deaths (51 total deaths)

Type	Number of deaths
Gunshot/shotgun wounds	29
Drug intoxications	2
Hanging/ligature strangulation	12
Other	8

The following are some general features of the suicide deaths:

- 41 males and 10 females
- Males ranged from 19 to 88 years of age and included the following:
 - Gunshot/shotgun wound – 19 deaths
 - Drug intoxication – 2 deaths
 - Carbon monoxide poisoning – 1 death
 - Hanging/ligature strangulation - 12 deaths

- Blunt force injuries – 5 deaths
- Drowning – 1 death
- Asphyxia from plastic bag over head – 1 death
- Females ranged from 21 to 74 years of age and included the following:
 - Gunshot/shotgun wounds – all 10 deaths
 - No other deaths from other mechanisms

Accidental Deaths (83 total deaths)

Type	Number of deaths
Blunt force injuries	41
Drugs and/or alcohol intoxication	36
Unsafe sleep environments in infants	2
Hypothermia	1
Mechanical asphyxia	1
Hydrogen peroxide intoxication	1
Thermal burns and smoke inhalation	1

Of the blunt force injury deaths, the majority were related to motor vehicles (27 deaths).

Homicide deaths (9 total deaths)

- 6 males and 3 females
- Age range of 11 years old to 82 years old
- 4 deaths from gunshot wounds
- 2 deaths from stab wounds
- 2 deaths from injuries sustained from a motor vehicle driven intentionally into another vehicle
- 1 death related to blunt force injuries from an assault

Natural deaths (105 total deaths)

Of the 105 natural deaths that underwent autopsy examination, a large portion of the deaths were cardiovascular related (49 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 directly related to COVID-19 respiratory infection (16 deaths). There were 11 deaths related to complications of chronic alcoholism. The remaining deaths were from varying natural disease processes including pneumonia, cancer and complications of dementia among others.

Undetermined deaths (4 total deaths)

- 2 deaths of adults in which decomposition made it difficult to determine the cause and manner of death but there were no concerning findings to suggest homicides in these cases.
- Death of an adult male who died due to complications of blunt force injuries. Based on thorough review of medical records, scene investigation, circumstances and autopsy findings, it was unclear if the death was from an assault by another individual or from an accidental fall while intoxicated.
- Death of an adult male related to a drug intoxication. After thorough review of all the findings it was unclear if the death was intentional (suicide) or an accident.

Infant deaths (deaths of those 1 year old or younger) (4 total deaths)

- 3 month old male; died due to positional asphyxia from an unsafe sleep environment; manner of death was accident
- 2 month old female; died due to positional asphyxia from an unsafe sleep environment; manner of death was accident
- 2 deaths that were natural stillbirth/intrauterine fetal demise
- All 4 deaths underwent complete autopsy
- All 4 deaths were certified by the associated Coroner's Office

Additional Information:

Unidentified bodies: 0

Bodies brought to facility: 430

Organ or tissue donation: 14

Unclaimed bodies: 0

Exhumations: 0

Cases referred/consulted not undergoing examination: 39