



Walworth County Medical Examiner's Office

Fall 2018

Volume 2, Number 2

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SAVE THE DATE
Asphyxial Deaths
November 8, 2018
9 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Lake Geneva PD

Walworth County Medical Examiner's Office

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Amy Sheil, MD

**To report a death,
please call:
(262) 741-4401**

- Drug Investigations -

Thank you to everyone who was able to attend the Drug Investigation Spring Training. This was our best-attended presentation so far with more than one dozen agencies represented. With drug use such a prevalent topic both in the media and in our daily lives as investigators, here's a few more thoughts from our office when working these complex cases.

Patients transferred to a local hospital:

Many times law enforcement is called to a location for a rescue call and the primary responsibility is to save this person. Once the patient is transported, it would, of course, be helpful to talk with everyone on scene. Some of these questions can really assist the medical examiner's office should the patient not survive the intoxication:

- ✚ How had the patient been over the last 24-48 hours?
- ✚ Where had he or she been?
- ✚ What are they known to ingest and what is suspected in this case?
- ✚ What was the method of ingestion?

When we sign a death certificate, a drug overdose/intoxication is considered an injury. For every injury, we have to answer "where" and "when" the injury occurred. If we at the MEO are not responding to a scene because the patient dies in a hospital setting, we often do not have access to those same people who were with the patient when he/she became ill. If these questions are not answered at the time of "injury", they may never be known.

Whenever possible, we always suggest having a decedent's phone reviewed for incoming/outgoing calls, messages, internet searches, etc. This information can not only help with the "when" and "where" of an injury, but it may help with the intent.

Hospitals typically retain admission specimens for only six (6) days. If it is felt that the patient's outcome will result in death, some agencies request that the hospital place a hold on admission blood and urine. If the patient dies, let our office know specimens are on hold and we will send those specimens for testing.

When toxicology results come back, knowing how the person ingested the drugs can be pretty important. An example would be if results show what appear to be therapeutic ranges of a prescription medication but this person snorted the pills (which were long-lasting, meant to cover pain for 6-8 hours). That "therapeutic" range in the blood could have been the cause of death because of the method of ingestion.

MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE FALL TRAINING – ASPHYXIAL DEATHS

(to include the Multi-State Suitcase Killer Case Presentation)

SPEAKERS: ME Lynda Biedrzycki & Walworth County Sheriff Detective Jeff Recknagel

DATE AND TIME: Thursday, November 8, 2018 from 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

LOCATION: Lake Geneva Police Department

RSVP: Lt. Todd Neumann (262) 741-4680

Walworth County Drug-Related Deaths

	Total # drug-related deaths	Accident	Suicide	Undetermined	Average Age	By Substance (alone or in combination)		
						Total Heroin-related	Opiate Medications	Other Drugs or Medications
2012	15	13	1	1	38 years	3	10	2
2013	18	14	2	2	44 years	7	9	2
2014	14	14	0	0	46 years	3	10	1
2015	23	20	1	2	41 years	6	12	5
2016	22	19	2	1	44 years	5	14	3
2017*	16	16	0	0	44 years	5	8	3
TOTAL	108	96	6	6	43 years	29	63	16

(*cases still pending)

INTERESTING DRUG FACTS

Diphenhydramine is the main ingredient in Benadryl and many sleep aids (listed on our death certificate in 6 intoxication cases over 2015-2017)



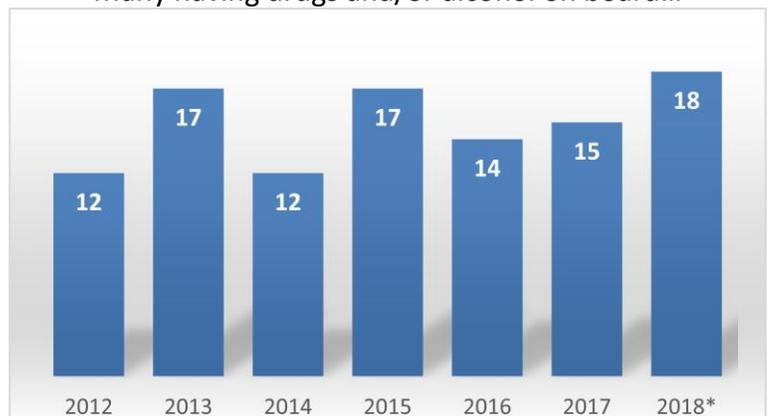
Heroin breaks down into morphine as the body metabolizes the drug. A finding of 6-monoacetylmorphine (6-MAM) on a tox screen indicates heroin use.

What specifically are we seeing in our Walworth County drug deaths? From the most to the least: heroin followed by oxycodone, morphine, fentanyl, and hydrocodone.

FENTANYL ON THE RISE...

It's likely no surprise that fentanyl-related deaths appear to be on the rise...we saw 2 in 2016, 3 in 2017, and 3 so far in 2018. Fentanyl is approximately 100 times more potent than morphine and 50 times more potent than heroin as a pain reliever.

To date, we have lost 105 people to suicide since 2012. Many having drugs and/or alcohol on board...



Our November training on asphyxial deaths represents our 4th county-wide death investigation training offered since 2016. Past topics were child death investigations (with doll re-enactment), gunshot wound and sharp force injuries, and drug investigations. We have also been invited to local law enforcement offices for smaller presentations – whether it's stopping by for a shift briefing or discussing a specific topic, our office is always open to working together for trainings.

If you have a suggestion for our next county-wide training, or would like our staff to present on a topic specific to your department, please contact Gina Carver at (262) 741-4495.