2013 CORONER’S REPORT
2013 ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

Coroner
Graham Hetrick

Chief Deputy
Lisa Potteiger

Assist. Chief Deputy
Lynn Choborda

Full-time Deputy
Thomas Reinhard

Full-time Deputy
Zachary Smeltz

Full-time Deputy
J Friel/G Bowser

Admin. Assistant
Jill Payne

Solicitor
Ronald Butler

Part-time Deputy
Richard Wilson

Part-time Deputy
Vacant
2013
There were 794 deaths referred to this office in 2013. In 23% of these deaths, this office released jurisdiction. The remaining 77% required full investigations, and 25% of these investigations required autopsies to determine the causes and manners of death.
INVESTIGATED DEATHS

The number of natural death investigations accounted for 56% of the total investigations conducted by this office. This was followed by, in decreasing order, accidental deaths, suicidal deaths, homicidal deaths, and deaths where the manner has yet to be determined.
Of these investigations, 51% originated in the decedents’ homes. Of the remainder: 22% at Hershey Medical Center, 14% at Harrisburg Hospital, 2% at Community General Hospital, and the remaining 11% at other places.
There were 341 natural death investigations in 2013, which is an increase of approximately 7% over the 315 natural death investigations that were conducted in 2012.

(The ages spanned from Newborn to 101 years of age)
NATURAL DEATHS

Heart and heart related incidents accounted for 69% of the reported natural deaths followed by Pulmonary 11%, Cancer 5%, Renal Disease 3%, and 12% due to other causes.
ACCIDENTAL DEATHS

There were 158 accidental death investigations conducted in 2013. This is relatively the same as the accidental death investigations in 2012.

(The ages of accident victims spanned from Newborn to 97 years)
ACCIDENTAL DEATHS

Of the 158 accidental deaths, 34% were associated with motor vehicle collisions, 33% were from falls, 24% were drug related, and the remaining 9% were associated with other causes.
SUICIDE

There were 53 suicide investigations in 2013. This represented an increase from the 45 suicide investigations in 2012.

(The ages of the decedents spanned from 17 years to 86 years)
Firearms were used in 51% of these deaths, followed by hanging with 24%, drug overdose with 11%, and 14% other methods.
There were 27 homicide investigations conducted in 2013. This is a 40% increase compared to the 16 homicide death investigations that were conducted in 2012.

(The ages of the victims spanned from 04 months to 87 years)
HOMICIDE DEATHS

Firearms were used in 27% of these investigations, followed by traumatic injuries at 26% and stabbings at 7%.
This office investigated a total of 74 calls that were transported in from other counties. Of these, 11% required autopsies.
Improvements in Forensic Services and Equipment:

The addition of the Macroscope which allow for the discovery and documentation of trace evidence. This is evidence that can not easily be seen by the naked eye.

In 2014 we will receive from a Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency grant a high performance slide microscope. This enables us to take examination of evidence down to a cellular level within the confines of our forensic lab. We will also have improved lighting in the autopsy suite. We wish to thank the PCCD.

In 2014 we will go to a “Quincy” software system that is web based and will allow us to retrieve information much quicker, in greater detail and from remote locations.
In Closing

It should be noted that our case load is growing and the complexity of the sciences within medical/legal death investigation are ever increasing. This office will endeavor to stay with the growth in forensic sciences and provide the technologies to our field of forensic investigation.

Also this report mirrors the national trend of the abuse of prescription drugs which has reach “epidemic” proportions. Heroin is also on the rise both because of its low price and easy availability but also because it is the end result of opioid prescription drug abuse.

Suicides and homicides were both up this year but this is only one year and can not be called a statistical trend at this point. I would say that my personal belief is that our society is going through a period of societal and economic change which is impacting on both individuals and families.

It is my pleasure to serve Dauphin County. I am proud of my staff and their dedication to medical/legal death investigation and the citizen of this County.

Graham S. Hetrick, MS, FD, B.C.F.E.