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Iowa Office of the State Medical Examiner Update 2021

Dennis Klein M.D.

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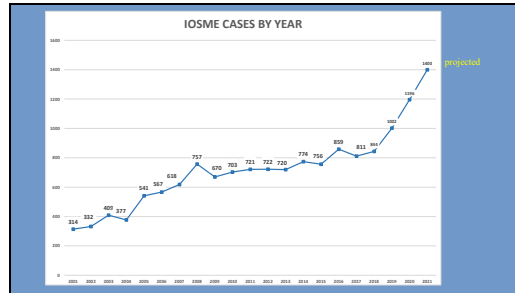
**Mission Goals**

- Conduct high quality and professional medical legal death investigations
- Provide and Protect credible and useful information
- Serve the public ethically and compassionately

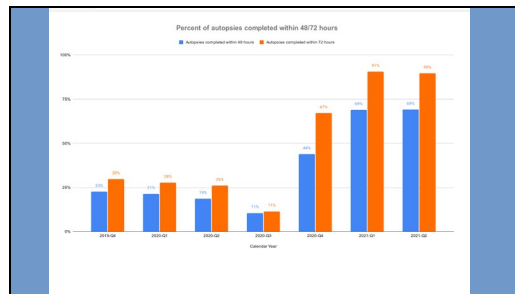
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	2019	2020	% autopsied in 2020
Total cases reported	7,308	10,291	
Autopsies	1,472	1,966	5.5% (all deaths)
Homicides	79	124	100%
Suicides	415	576	66%
Accidents	1,135	1,817	42%
Naturals	5,238	7,688	8%
Undetermined	85	125	95%

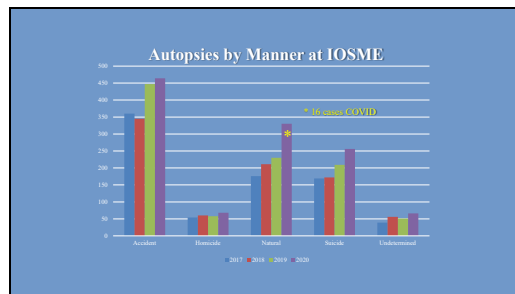
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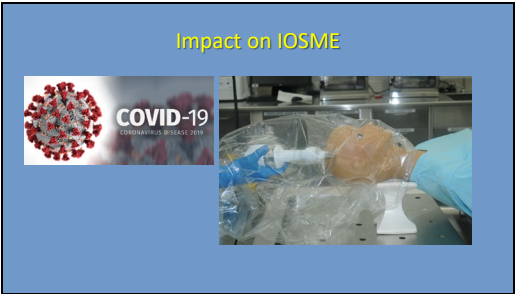
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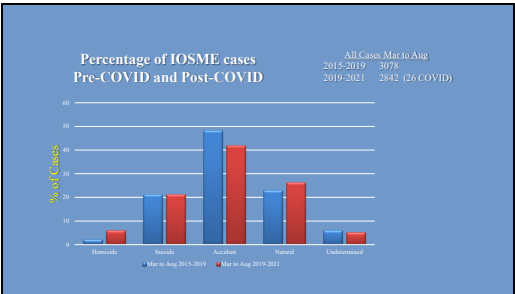
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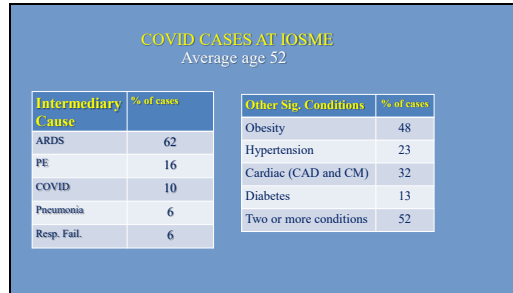
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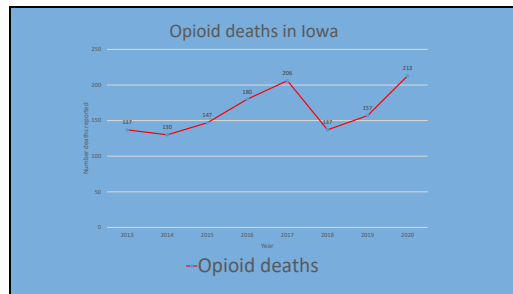
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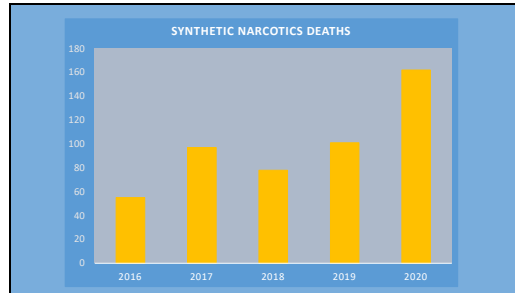


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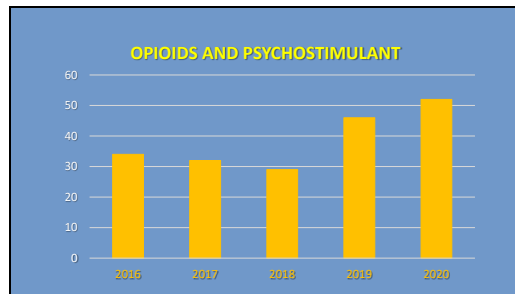
**# Deaths Involving Opioids in Iowa**

Age Group	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<24	23	26	16	10	29
25-34	39	40	47	48	62
35-44	41	45	28	35	48
45-54	47	57	19	27	39
<b>55+</b>	30	38	27	37	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>213</b>

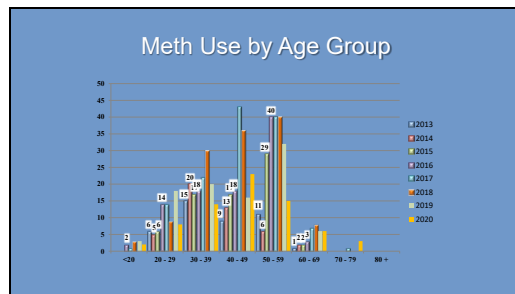
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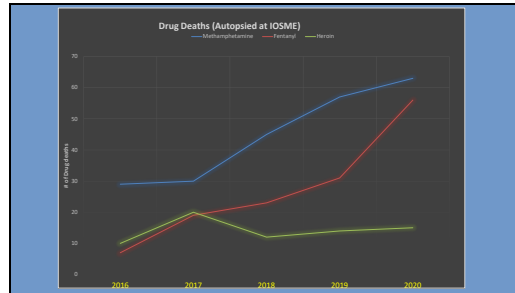
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**Synthetic Opioids**  
**Etodesnitazine, Isotonitazene & Etonitazene**

- Distributed powder or tablet form
- Tendency for high potency
- Can be missed on ELISA screening for opioids
- Detection limits can be below GC-MS sensitivity
- **Rely on Investigation and Off panel lab detection**

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**Autopsy**

- NAME standards-
  - The forensic pathologist shall perform a forensic autopsy when:
    - the death is by apparent intoxication by alcohol, drugs, or poison, unless a significant interval has passed, and the medical findings and absence of trauma are well documented.
- **WHY?**
  - Interpretation
  - Prosecution
  - Sentinel novel drugs

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### Recommendations

- Opioids- Watching for increase
  - Fentanyl (+/- analogs) continue to be important
- Methamphetamine- Major Drug in Iowa
- Drug use and intoxication extending into 50's and 60's
  - Complex interpretation of Natural Disease and Toxicology
  - Increase index of suspicion in older age groups
  - Lower threshold for autopsy in 50-60 age group
  - Long T<sub>1/2</sub> (9-12 hr depending on route) - may not see drug at scene

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### IOSME Staffing

#### 16 Full Time

- 5 Forensic Pathologists
- 2 MEI liaison
- 2 Medical Examiner Investigator
- 1 Office manager
- 3 Autopsy Technicians
- 2 Administrative Assistants
- 1 Radiology Technician

#### 30 Part Time

- Autopsy technicians
- Morgue Attendants
- Administrative Assistants
- Investigators (2)
- Pathologists (3)

#### Partnership

- 2 IDN Liaisons/Investigators

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### Challenges (Staffing)

#### Recommended staffing by NAME (57 FTEs):

# autopsies	Pathologists	Technicians	Investigators	Admin/clerical	Attendants
1,000	6	5	7	9	6
1,200	7	6	7	9	6
1,400	8	7	9	11	7

	# autopsies	Pathologists	Technicians	Investigators	Admin/clerical	Attendants
2019	1,002	4	3	2	3	Part-time
2020	1,196	4	3	2	3	Part-time
2021	1,400	5	3	4	3	Part-time

Current staffing at State ME Office (total 16 FTEs)

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### Support for IOSME

- Thank you to Gov Reynolds, Dir Garcia, and Iowa Legislature
- Gen Fund increase of \$381,000
  - Last Gen Fund increase in 2009 (\$1.16 M)
  - Decreased over 3 years (\$822 K)
  - Decreased again in 2020 (\$814 K)
- FY 2022 (\$1.19 M)

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### NAME Accreditation

- Four year accreditation cycle
  - Annual review
    - 2020 Downgraded to provisional status
      - Phase II deficiency < 90% Autopsies performed in 72 hours
      - Phase I deficiency < 90% Autopsies performed in 48 hours
      - Concern for Phase II: 90 day Autopsy report final (90.2%)
    - 2021 Corrections and inspection
      - Phase II Corrected 91.8% autopsies completed within 72 hours
      - Concern for Phase II corrected 97.7 % completed in 90 days (93.0% within 60 days)

## Slide 24

### Challenges

- NAME accreditation pathologist ratio
  - <250 / full time pathologist
  - 50 -70 / part-time pathologist
- Call, testimony, and vacation coverage
- Surge and Mass Fatality Capacity
- Facility capacity



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### Mitigation

- Pathologist coverage
  - Additional Full time forensic pathologist (5)
  - Additional Board certified part time forensic pathologists (5)
- Investigator coverage
  - Additional full time investigators (4)
  - Part time investigator (1)
  - IDN MEJ liaisons (2)
- Administrative coverage
  - Increased work flow efficiencies
  - IT solutions
    - Electronic reports
    - Portal
    - Electronic invoicing

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### Mass Fatality and Surge Preparedness

- Increased cooler capacity
  - Installed High Density racks
  - Max capacity now 70
- On-site Cooling
  - Purchased reefer trailer
  - Refurbishing
  - Installation of Tommy lift and racks



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### Upgrade to Refrigerated trailer



## Slide 28

### Mass Fatality and Surge Preparedness

- Increase throughput efficiency
  - IT solutions to maximize efficiency scene to autopsy to report
- Increased X-ray capacity
  - Ceiling mounted with floating table and stitching capability
  - Portable X-ray
- Demonstrated increased autopsy throughput



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### Tissue Donation 2020

- IOSME referred 616 deaths to IDN, 43 became donors
- IOSME involved (autopsy) in 148 tissue donors
- 137 recoveries occurred at IOSME facility

## Slide 30

### Tissue Donation

- Continue to refer EVERY death to IDN
  - Protocols are continuously changing
  - Case referred for possible corneal donation
  - Efficiency of information reporting
- Transportation
  - If challenges in timely transport
    - Ask to speak with Funeral Director donation specialists
- Identification tags on body (not clothing)

## Slide 31

### Child Death Review Team

- Combined annual reports 2016-2018
- Public Education on safe sleep
  - Dr Errthum work on onsite initiative
  - Presentation by Teri VanKooten
- NIH safe sleep education  
<https://safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov/safesleepbasics/SIDS/fastfact>

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### ABMDI

- Funds for 2021 St Louis course- COVID dependent
  - OPIOID Grant
  - Paul Coverdell National Forensic Science Improvement Act
- 43 Registry Diplomates in Iowa
- 13 Board Certified Fellows in Iowa

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### MEI Qualifications –Admin rule

- At least 2 years experience nurse or medical care provider
- Within 3 years
  - St Louis Basic course or its IOSME-approved equivalent
  - Obtain ABMDI certification
- Waiver if above not able to be achieved

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### St Louis Course and MDIC



Midwest Death Investigation Course

- July 18-22, 2021
- DMACC campus in Ankeny
- Scene House complete

- Course registration \$650
- Live streamed
- 18 Registered for Sept course

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### System Goals

- Death Reporting**
  - Appropriate deaths reported to CME
  - Reports completed in 14 days (Iowa Code)
- Standardized Drug Intoxication Certifications**
  - Include specific drugs in COD statement
  - Index of suspicion
  - Include broad age range

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### Reporting ME Deaths

B. INVESTIGATIONS			
Investigation Item		Yes	No
<b>Accuracy and timeliness of data</b>			
1. Have the following been reviewed and approved prior to release: (a) notification, (b) release of information, (c) and (d) release of information			
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Population 3.12 M

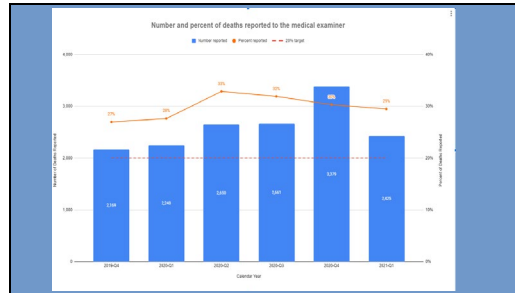
Deaths 35,669 (2020)

Deaths 30,399 (2019)

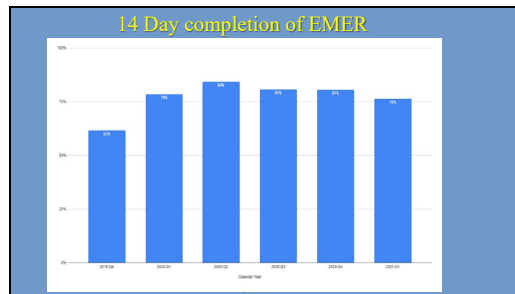
Deaths reported

- 2018 5,547 (18%)
- 2019 7,308 (23%)
- 2020 10,893 (30%)

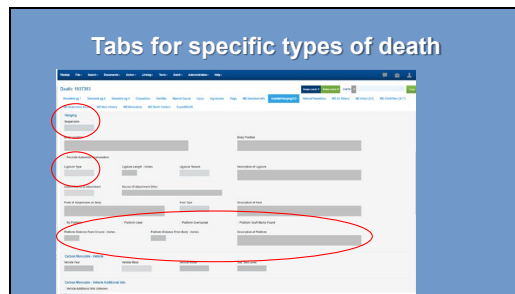
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The screenshot shows the Microsoft Dynamics CRM 2011 interface. The top navigation bar includes tabs for Home, Sales, Marketing, Customer Service, and others. The main content area displays a 'Person Type' dropdown menu, which is currently open. The dropdown list shows four options: 'Person', 'Person with a job', 'Person with a job and a role', and 'Person with a job and a role and a title'. The 'Person' option is highlighted. The background shows the CRM dashboard with various tabs like 'Home', 'Sales', 'Marketing', etc.

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# Narrative Description

**Narrative Summary of Circumstances Surrounding Death**

- Brief Case Description
- History/Circumstances (surrounding the death)
- Scene Description (include location and position of body)
- Case Assessment (impression of the reason for death)
- Reason for Disposition

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EMER Reminder to sign

MEMBER Entry & Approval

MEMBER Entry Completed?

Generate

MEMBER Entry By

County of Appointment

L2424 MEM Preliminary Report

L2424 MEM Preliminary Report

Save Signature Info

User Signature Info

## Slide 43

### Scene Photos

- Two or three properly exposed and in focus photos worth paragraphs of description
- Send via email [iosme.mel@idph.iowa.gov](mailto:iosme.mel@idph.iowa.gov)
- Do save on county servers
- Don't save on home computer

## Slide 44

### Indemnification and Workman's Compensation

- 641—127.11(331,691,670) Indemnification. A board of supervisors shall defend, hold harmless, and indemnify a county medical examiner and any properly appointed staff members to the extent provided in Iowa Code chapter 670.
- Coverage for work related injuries depends on employment status : Independent contractor –not covered.  
Employee of County, covered.

## Slide 45

### Deputy ME and MEI Approvals

- Michelle Engle assisting you with ensuring complete paper work
- Streamlined processing
- Updated Active list of County ME personnel

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### 2021 County ME and MEI

- County ME appointments
  - CMEs - 95
  - Deputy CMEs - 96
  - MEIs - 254
    - ABMDI Registrants - 35 (active)
    - ABMDI Board Certified Fellows - 9 (active)
- Legacy planning
  - Recruitment
  - MEI coverage
  - State ME has limited resources to provide scene investigation

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### Parting Requests

- Scene photos are invaluable to correlating the scene to autopsy findings- High Yield in documentation
- Complete the specialty sections and the narratives in EMER
- BOLO for drug deaths in the young and old
- Doll re-enactments for infant deaths- High Yield
- Be careful and keep yourself and your colleagues safe

## Slide 48

### Mass Fatality Planning

- Mass Fatality Response
  - County and State planning
  - IMORT Development
  - Leveraging existing services
    - 211
  - Exercise – planning table top this winter



"Plans are worthless, but planning is essential"



Dwight Eisenhower



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## IMORT Membership considerations

- ICS 100, 200, 700, BBP
- Scene
  - MEI
  - Scribe
  - Photographer
- Able to participate in meetings and exercises



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### How do I volunteer for IMORT?


All volunteers for IMORT must be registered through the Iowa Statewide Emergency Registry of Volunteers (ISERV). Volunteers can register online and update their information 24/7/365.

In order to register on the ISERV system, a volunteer must create an account at [www.iaserv.org](http://www.iaserv.org). Be sure to indicate a desire to join the "Iowa Volunteer For additional information about the team or for assistance in registering on ISERV email [IMORT@idph.iowa.gov](mailto:IMORT@idph.iowa.gov).

The Iowa Mortuary Operations Response Team (IMORT) is sponsored by:





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<https://www.iaserv.org/>