

Johnson County Medical Examiner Department

Annual Report 2017



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Introduction

The purpose of this annual report is to share information and annual statistics of the Johnson County Medical Examiner Department (JCME).

The primary function of JCME is to determine a scientifically based cause and manner of death for every death within its jurisdiction. Cause of death is defined as the disease or injury process that initiated the sequence of events that resulted in death (e.g., “atherosclerotic heart disease” or “gunshot wound of the head”). Manner of death is a public health statistic that classifies the circumstances under which death occurred (natural, accident, suicide, homicide, or undetermined). Jurisdiction is described by Iowa Code § 331.802 as those deaths which affect the “public interest.” Common examples are deaths that occur unexpectedly or from an unexplained cause; trauma deaths in the context of an accident, suicide, or homicide; deaths unattended by a physician; and deaths of children under the age of two.

In 2017, there were 721 deaths reported to JCME. Of these, 394 were accepted cases and were investigated and certified by JCME. After review of each of the remaining 327 reported deaths, jurisdiction was declined because the deaths were determined to not be in the “public interest”, as defined above. These deaths were certified by the decedent’s physician. The total number of deaths investigated or reviewed by JCME comprised 41% of the 1,749 deaths that occurred in Johnson County.

Of the 394 deaths accepted and investigated by JCME, 153 decedents were Johnson County residents and 201 were residents of other counties in Iowa. Additionally, there were 10 decedents who were in the custody of the Iowa Department of Corrections and 30 decedents were out-of-state residents. As a result, 39% of JCME’s accepted caseload consisted of Johnson County residents.

Of the 394, the incident location for 167 decedents was Johnson County. 191 incidents occurred in other Iowa counties and 10 incidents occurred while in the custody of the Iowa Department of Corrections. Additionally, for 24 decedents, the incident location was out-of-state. Two decedents had an incident location that was unknown.

Of the 394 deaths accepted and investigated by JCME, the manner of death was classified as accident for 184, natural for 151, suicide for 34, undetermined for 13, and homicide for 12.

In 2017, 137 autopsies were ordered by JCME. All JCME ordered autopsies were performed at UIHC and were complete autopsies. No partial autopsies were performed in 2017.

Of the 394 deaths accepted and investigated by JCME, all decedents were identified and there were no exhumations. Nine decedents were unclaimed by friends or family and final disposition was arranged by JCME.

In 2017, there were 67 decedents who were transported from the incident location by JCME. and 1 decedent was transported by a funeral service provider under the auspices of JCME.

Of these, 63 were transported to the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics Decedent Care Center, 4 to the Johnson County Ambulance Medical Examiner building, and 1 to a funeral service provider.

In 2017, there were 27 deaths of individuals 17 years of age and under. Of these 27 deaths, 12 were classified as accident followed by 7 as natural, 5 as undetermined, 2 as suicide, and 1 as homicide. For 7 of these deaths the incident location was Johnson County and for 20 deaths the resident location was other Iowa counties. There were 6 sleep-related infant deaths in 2017. Of these 6 deaths, 4 were classified as undetermined and 2 as accident. For 4 of these deaths the incident location was Johnson County and the other 2 incident locations were in other Iowa counties.

There were 237 cases accepted by JCME of adults aged 60 and older. Of these, there were 85 in which the death was the result of a fall. The majority of these, 59, occurred from a standing height, and 43 of the falls occurred inside of the decedent's home. The most common area of injury from a fall was the head and/or neck, which occurred in 43 of the falls.

In 2017, there were 23 drug-related deaths investigated by JCME. Of this total, 8 involved prescription and/or over-the-counter medications, 14 involved illicit drugs and/or prescription drugs, and 1 was unknown due to inadequate toxicology specimens. Of the illicit drug-related deaths, 5 involved heroin, 5 involved methamphetamine, 3 involved fentanyl, 2 involved cocaine, 1 involved acrylfentanyl and 1 involved MDMA. One was determined to have probably involved heroin, but adequate toxicological specimens were unavailable to confirm the specific drug used. Of the 23 drug-related deaths, 18 were classified as accident, 4 as suicide, and 1 was undetermined.

Of the 394 deaths accepted and investigated by JCME, 24 were classified as suicide. Seventeen of these deaths were the result of firearms and 8 were due to hanging. The sex distribution was 18 males and 6 females. The most common age range was 40 to 49 years (8 decedents) followed by 20 to 29 years (7 decedents).

A data point on every death certificate is utilized to indicate whether the use of tobacco contributed to death. This determination is made by the forensic pathologist responsible for certifying the death. Of the 394 deaths certified by JCME in 2017, it was determined that 51 were tobacco-related and 24 were probably tobacco-related.

Iowa law requires that a medical examiner issue a cremation permit prior to cremation. This requirement is to ensure that deaths are properly certified and that deaths within the jurisdiction of the medical examiner are not unreported. JCME issued 973 cremation permits to funeral service providers in 2017. There were 397 cremation permits issued to funeral service providers in Johnson County, 514 to other Iowa counties, and 62 to out-of-state. Cremation permits were issued to a total of 128 funeral service providers. Of the 973 cremation permits issued, 4 permits triggered the recognition of new medical examiner cases, or less than 1% of all cremation permits issued.

The Johnson County Older Adult Death Review Team and the Johnson County Child Death Review Team are facilitated by JCME. The purpose of the Teams is to gain greater understanding of issues associated with the deaths of adults aged 60 and older and children under the age of 17. Information gained from the review of these cases is used to identify trends and risk factors, as well as to educate and mobilize community forces to prevent similar deaths in the future.

JCME has a crucial role in the coordination of organ and tissue donation. In 2017, 22 accepted JCME cases became organ donors. From these 22 individuals, Iowa Donor Network coordinated the recovery of 32 kidneys, 12 livers, 6 lungs, 9 hearts, 2 pancreases, and 1 small intestine for transplant. Sixteen accepted JCME cases became tissue and cornea donors with the recovery of bone, skin, heart valves, saphenous veins, femoral veins, adipose tissue, and/or joints. One tissue donor can enhance the lives of more than 300 people. JCME fully supports organ and tissue donation and, by policy, JCME refers all out-of-hospital deaths that fall under our jurisdiction to Iowa Donor Network.

JCME requires its investigative employees to be certified by the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators (ABMDI). ABMDI is a voluntary, national, not-for-profit, independent professional certification organization that was established to promote the highest standards of practice for medicolegal death investigators. In 2017 JCME had two Board Certified Death Investigators (Advanced): Clayton Schuneman and Kate Bengtson, and two Registry Certified Death Investigators (Basic): Guy Sommers and Rebecca Franklin. Additionally, the three forensic pathologist medical examiners, Marcus Nashelsky, MD, Dennis Firchau, MD, and Stephanie Stauffer, MD, are certified in Anatomic, Clinical, and Forensic Pathology by the American Board of Pathology.

In July 2017, moved investigative and administrative operations to the Ambulance and Medical Examiner (AME) building. This allowed JCME to further professionalize our operations and consolidate all administrative and investigative activities in one location.


Marcus Nashelsky, MD
Medical Examiner

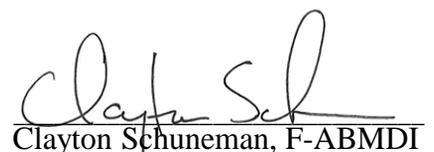
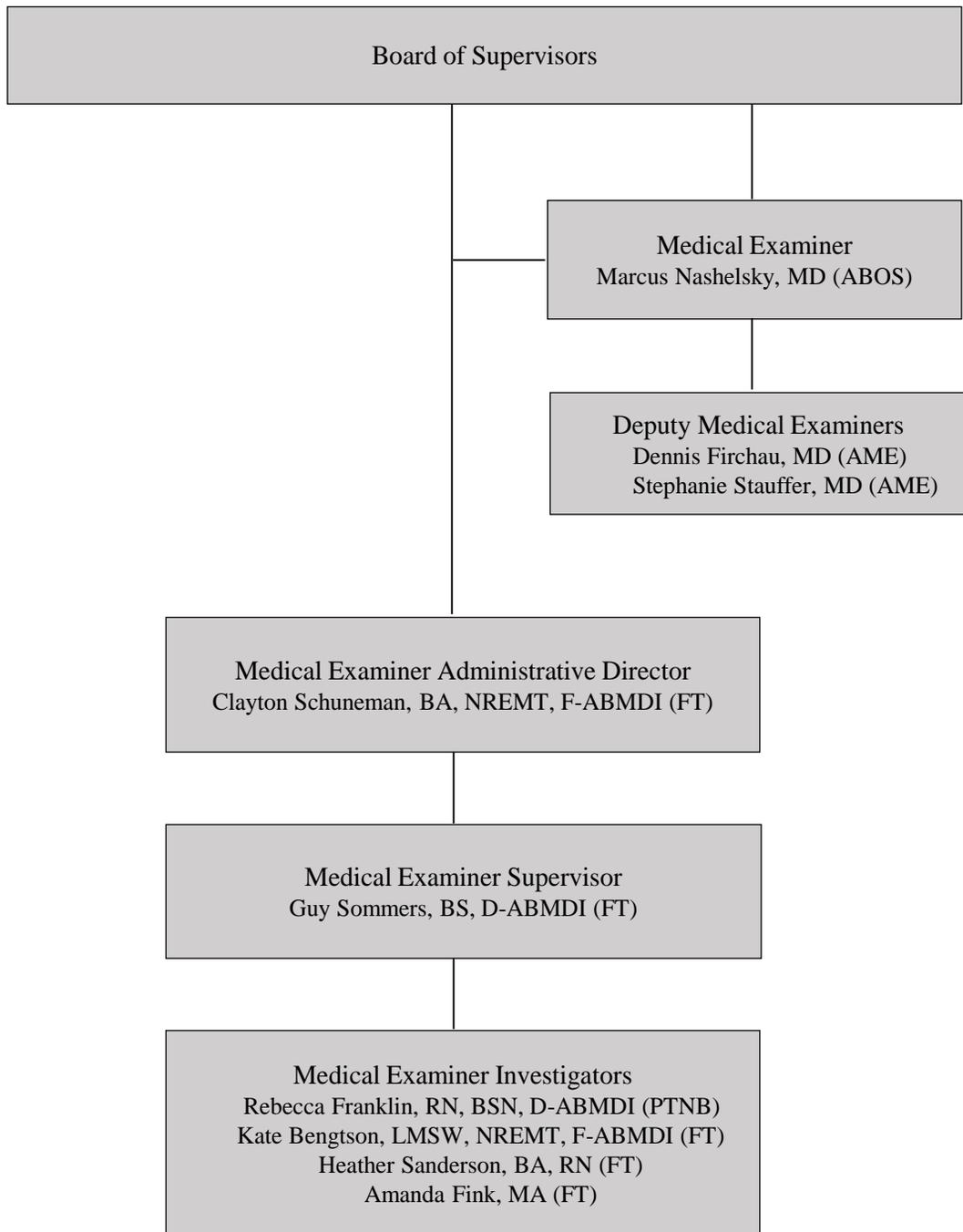

Clayton Schuneman, F-ABMDI
Administrative Director

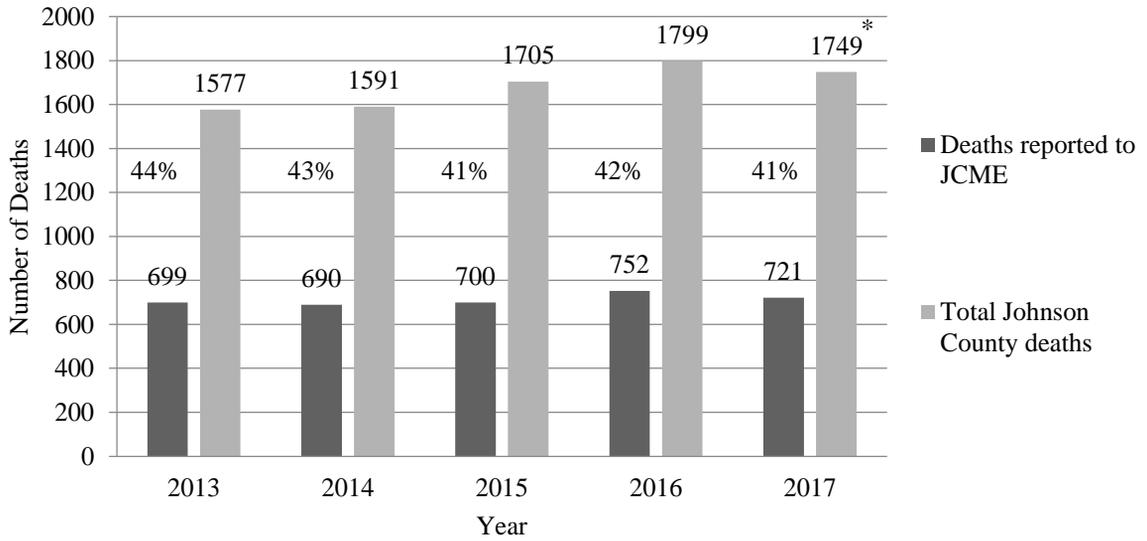
Figure 1.1. Organizational Chart (2017)



Employment/Appointment Status Key:

- ABOS: Appointed by Board of Supervisors
- AME: Appointed by Medical Examiner
- FT: Full-time
- PTNB: Part-time without benefits

Percentage of Johnson County Deaths Reported to JCME (2013 - 2017)



*As of 6/24/2018

Figure 1.2.

Cremation Permits, Accepted Cases, and Jurisdiction Declined Cases by Month (2017)

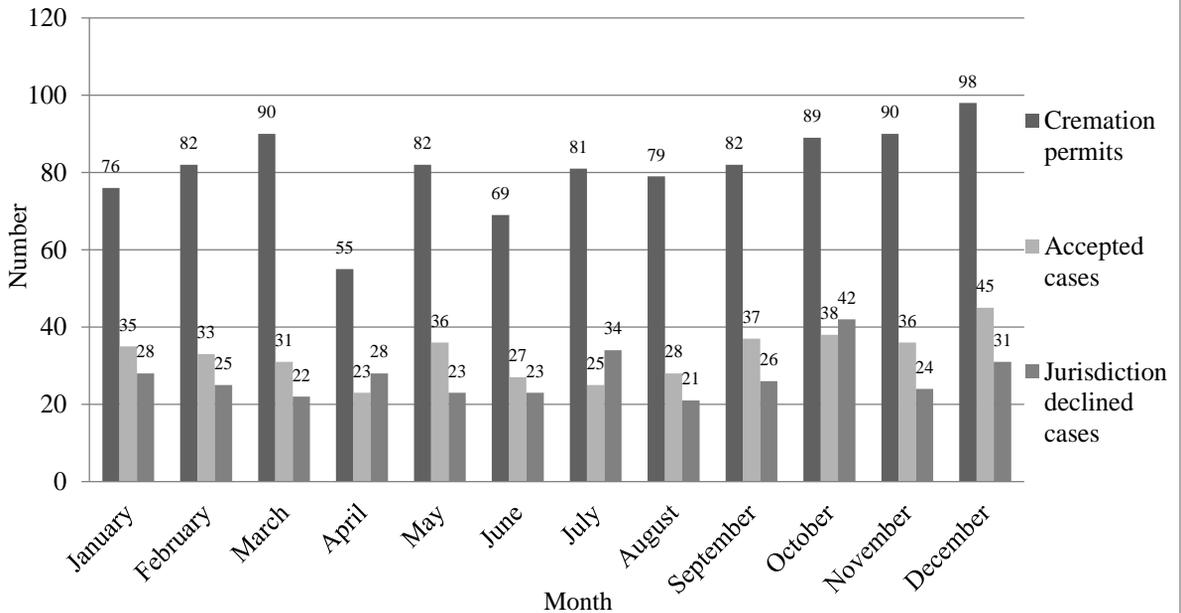


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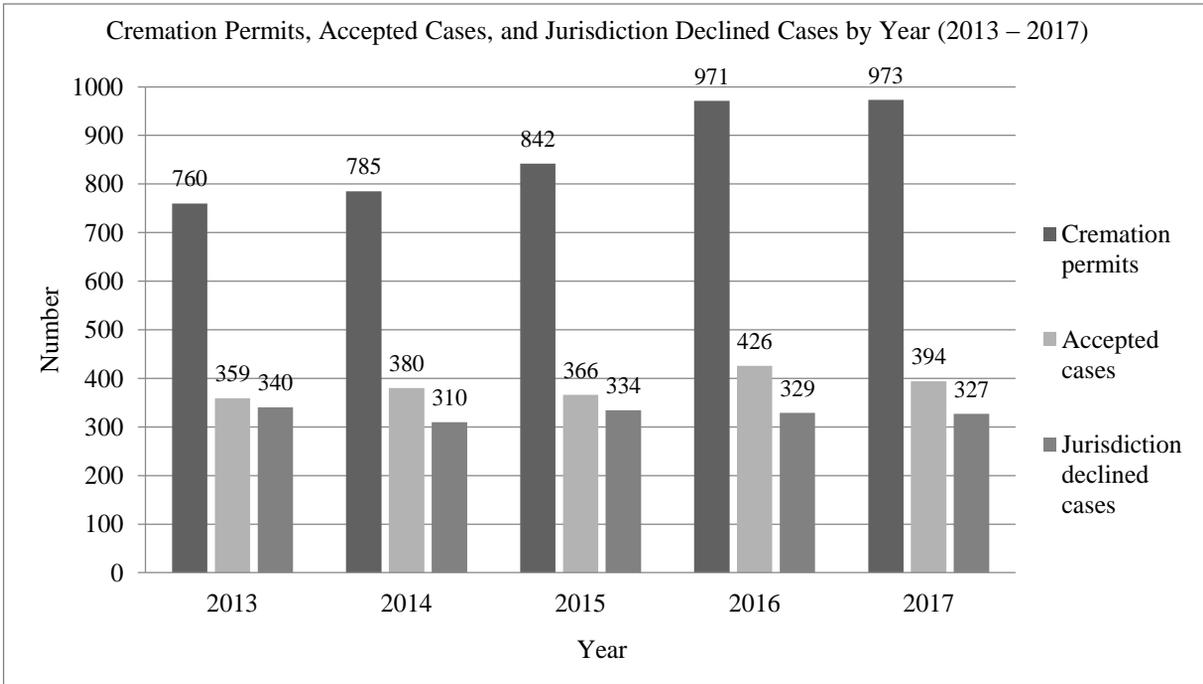


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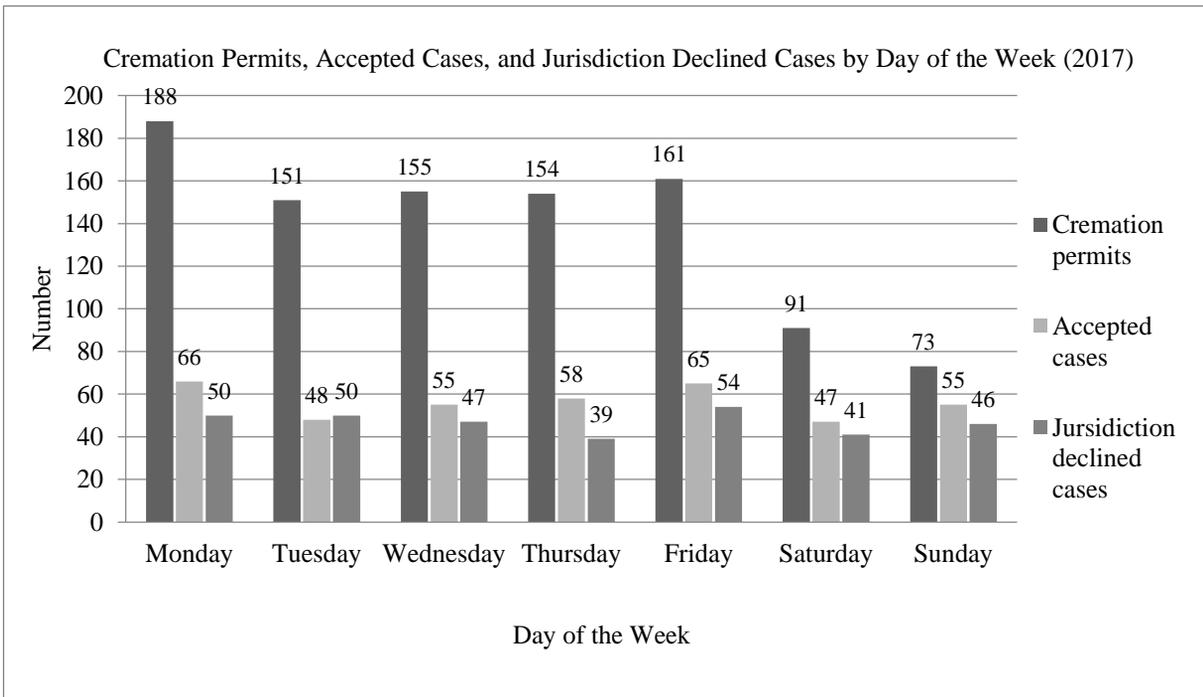


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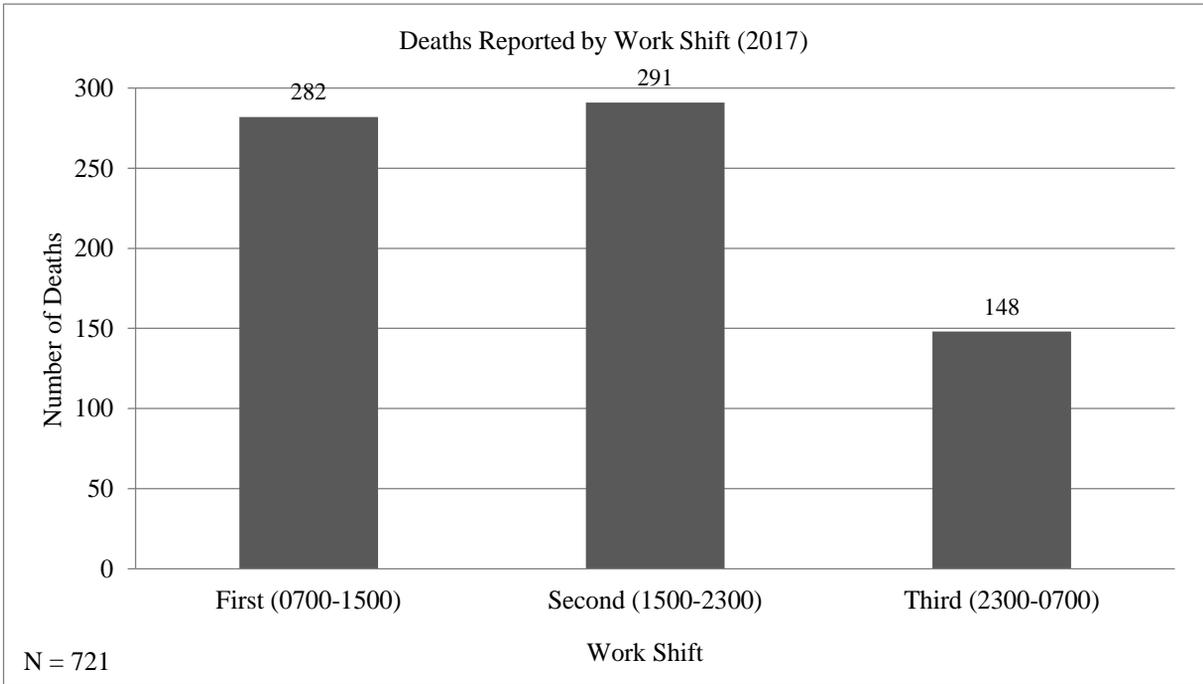


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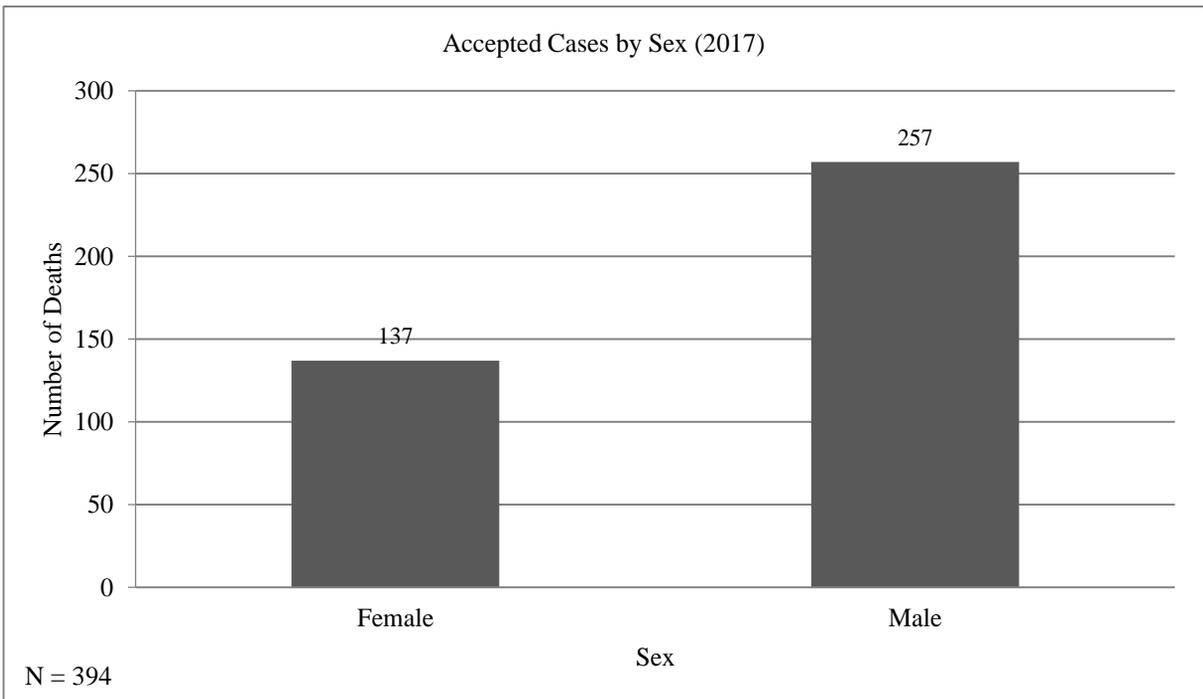


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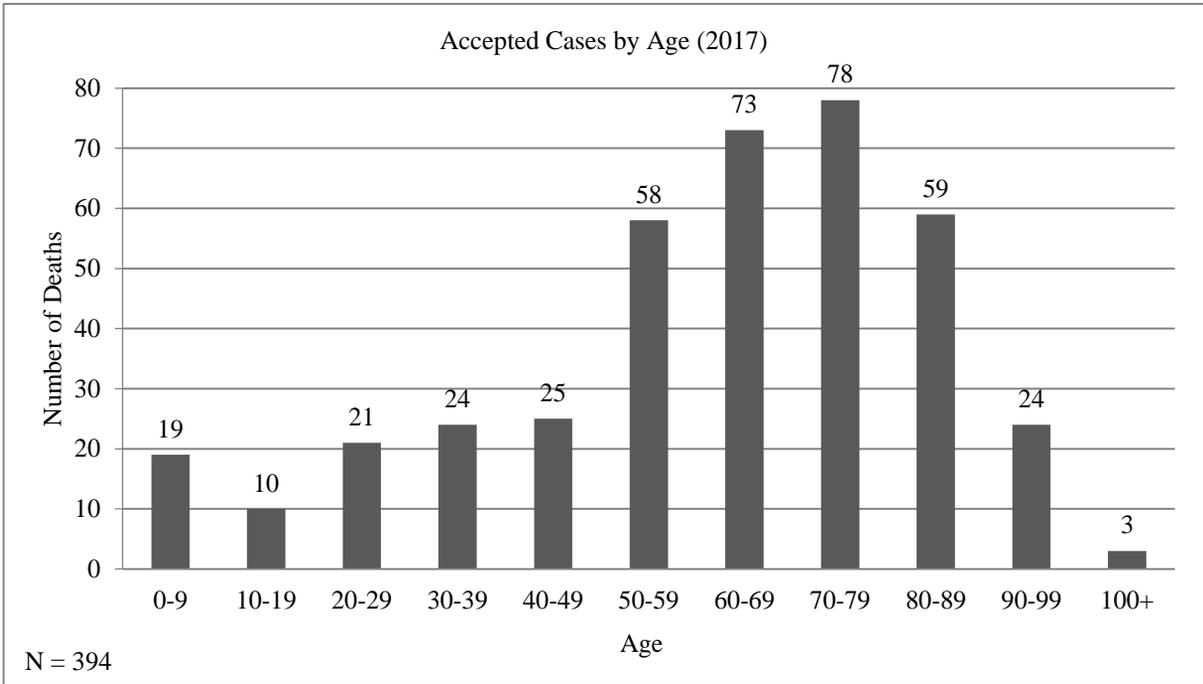


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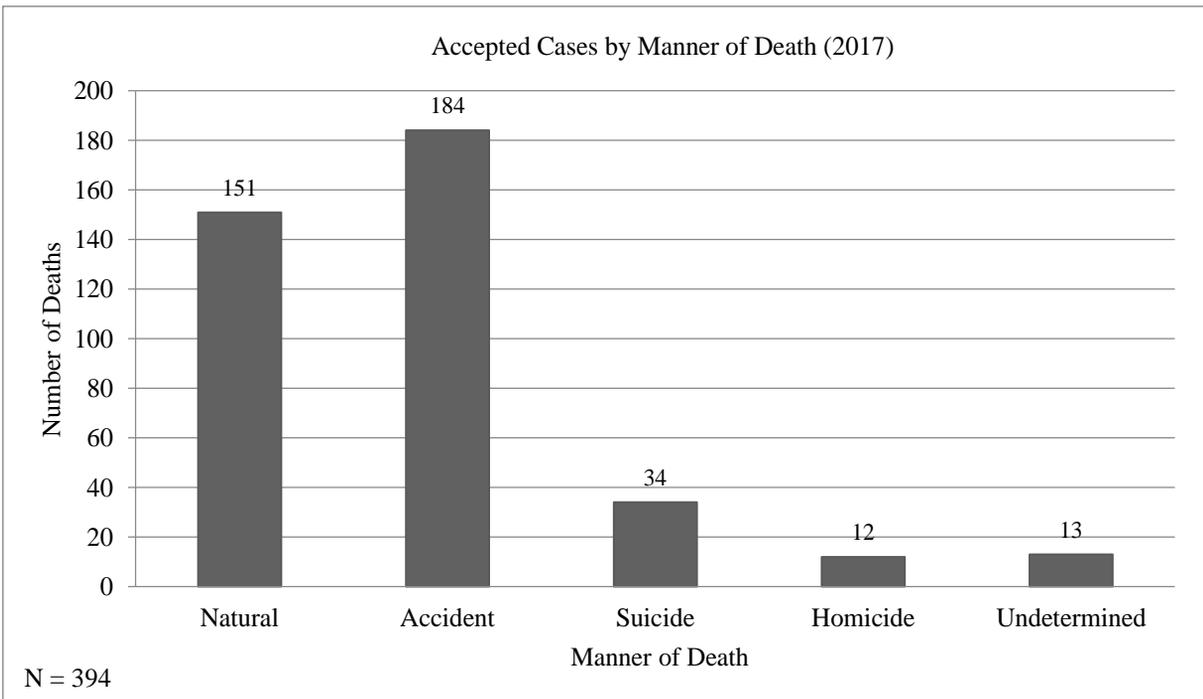


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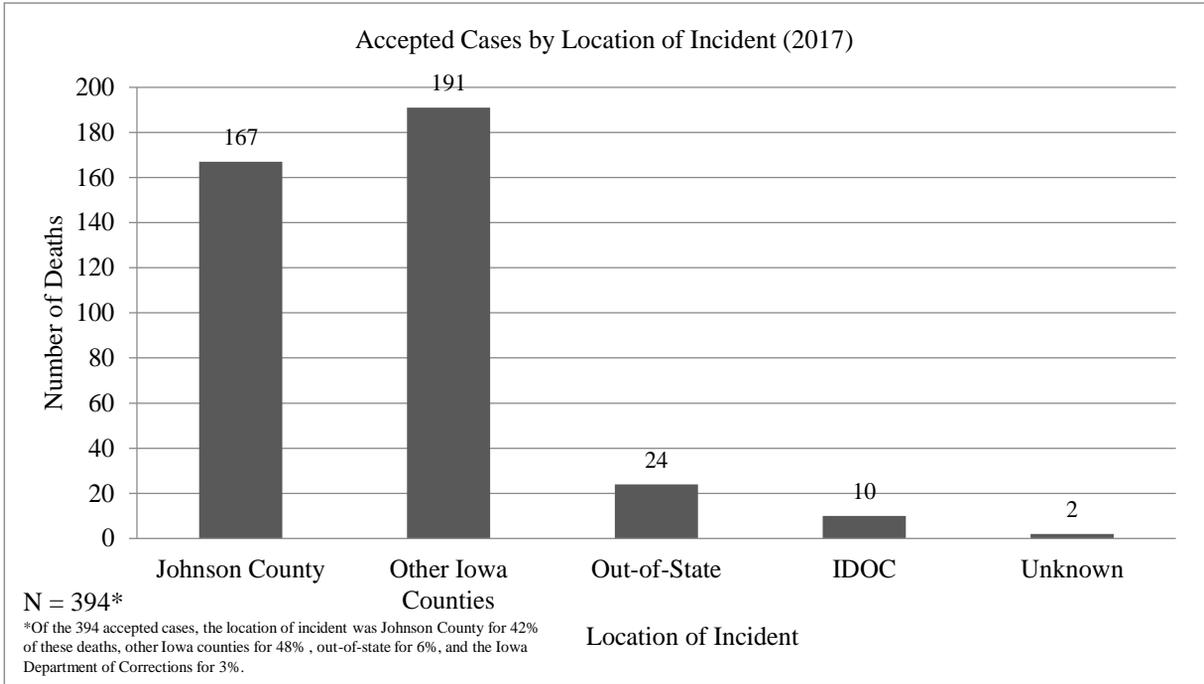


Figure 1.10.

Table 1.1. Other Iowa Counties Location of Incident (2017)

County	Number of Decedents
Linn	17
Scott	17
Dubuque	14
Washington	13
Cedar	12
Clinton	12
Black Hawk	11
Iowa	11
Muscatine	8
Des Moines	7
Louisa	7
Henry	6
Polk	6
Wapello	6
Lee	5
Jefferson	4
Keokuk	3
Benton	2
Bremer	2
Buchanan	2
Clinton	2
Delaware	2
Fayette	2
Mahaska	2
Poweshiek	2
Wright	2
Allamakee	1
Appanoose	1
Butler	1
Cerro Gordo	1
Dallas	1
Davis	1
Jackson	1
Jones	1
Kossuth	1
Lucas	1
Madison	1
Monroe	1
Webster	1
Woodbury	1

Table 1.2. Out-of-State Location of Incident (2017)

County and State	Number of Decedents
Rock Island, IL	11
Whiteside, IL	3
Jo Daviess, IL	2
Grant, IL	1
Hancock, IL	1
Hancock, OH	1
Henry, IL	1
Nodaway, MO	1
Pearl River, MS	1
San Jacinto, TX	1
Warren, IL	1

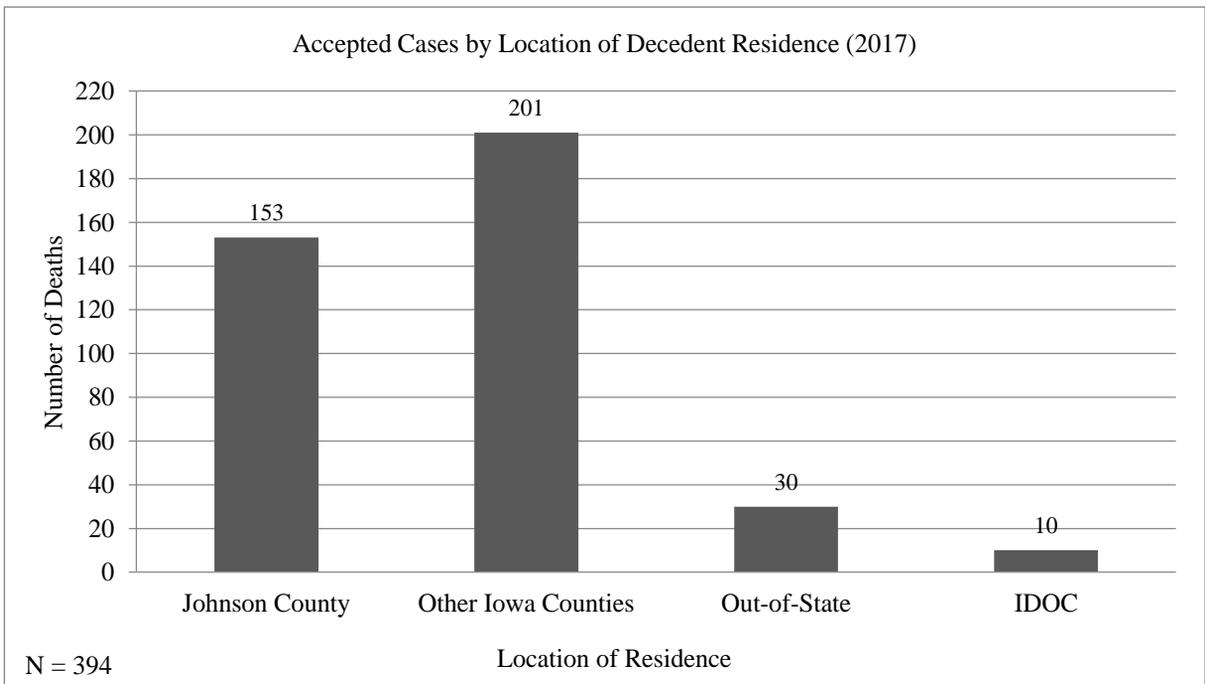


Figure 1.11.

Table 1.3. Other Iowa Counties Location of Decedent Residence (2017)

County	Number of Decedents
Linn	25
Scott	18
Dubuque	14
Washington	14
Black Hawk	11
Clinton	11
Cedar	10
Muscatine	9
Iowa	8
Des Moines	7
Louisa	7
Keokuk	6
Lee	6
Polk	6
Wapello	5
Henry	4
Jefferson	4
Benton	3
Bremer	2
Buchanan	2
Clayton	2
Delaware	2
Fayette	2
Mahaska	2
Wright	2
Allamakee	1
Appanoose	1
Cerro Gordo	1
Dallas	1
Floyd	1
Jackson	1
Jones	1
Kossuth	1
Lucas	1
Madison	1
Marion	1
Marshall	1
Monroe	1
Pocahontas	1
Poweshiek	1
VanBuren	1
Webster	1
Winnebago	1
Woodbury	1

Table 1.4. Out-of-State Location of Decedent Residence (2017)

County and State	Number of Decedents
Rock Island, IL	11
Whiteside, IL	4
Hancock, IL	2
Jo Daviess, IL	2
Bureau, IL	1
Cook, IL	1
Grant, WI	1
Hancock, OH	1
Henry, IL	1
Macon, MO	1
Nodaway, MO	1
Oklahoma, OK	1
Pearl River, MS	1
San Jacinto, TX	1
Will, IL	1

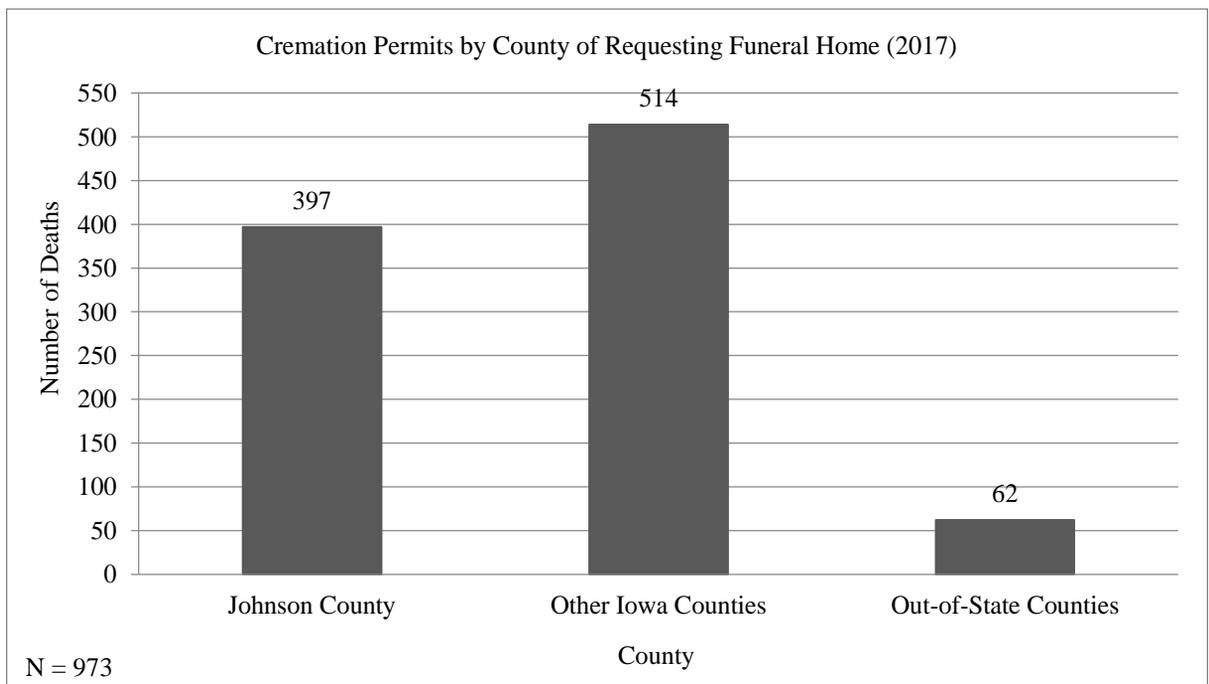


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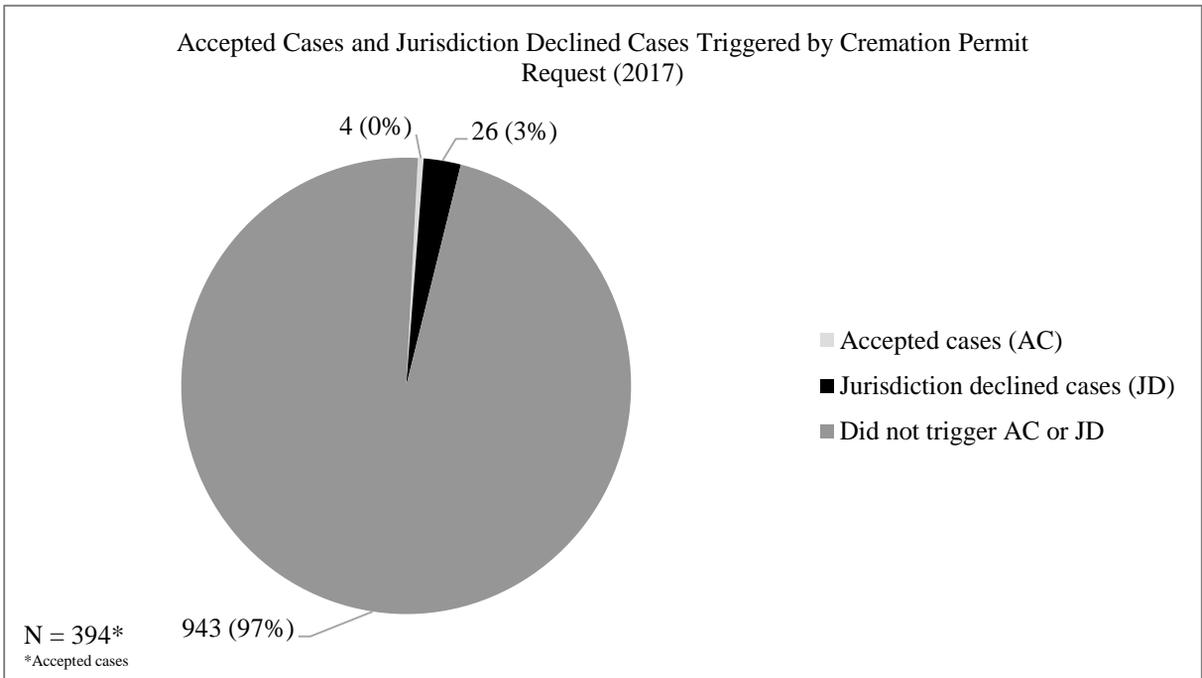


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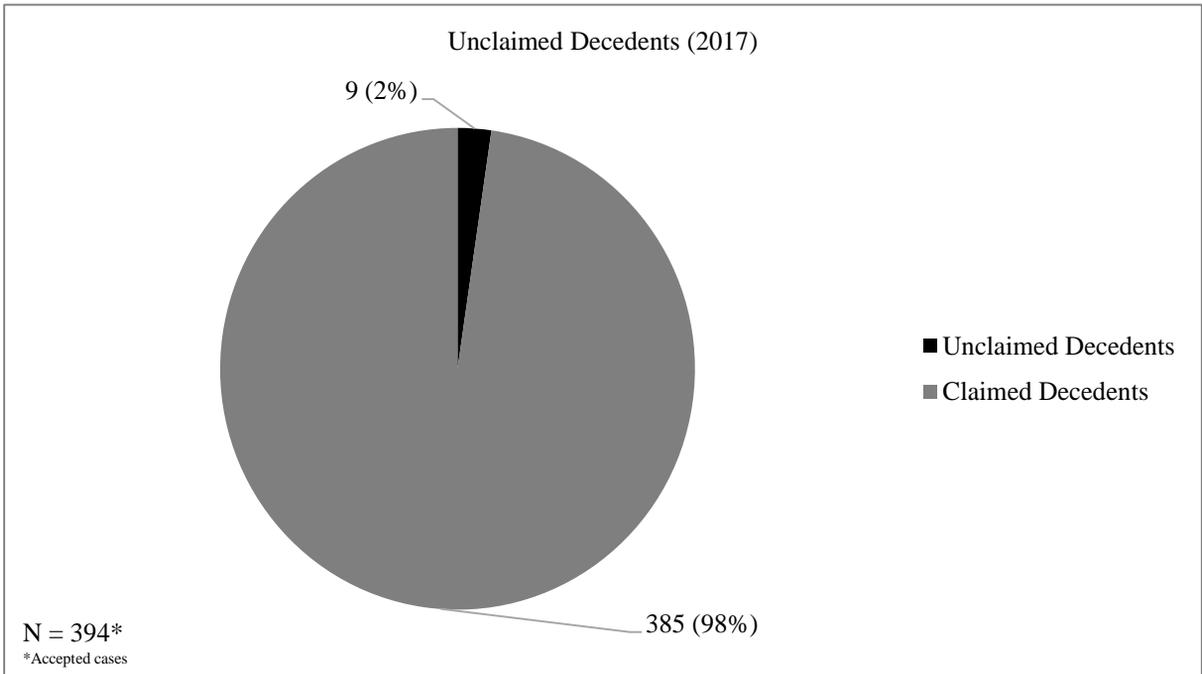


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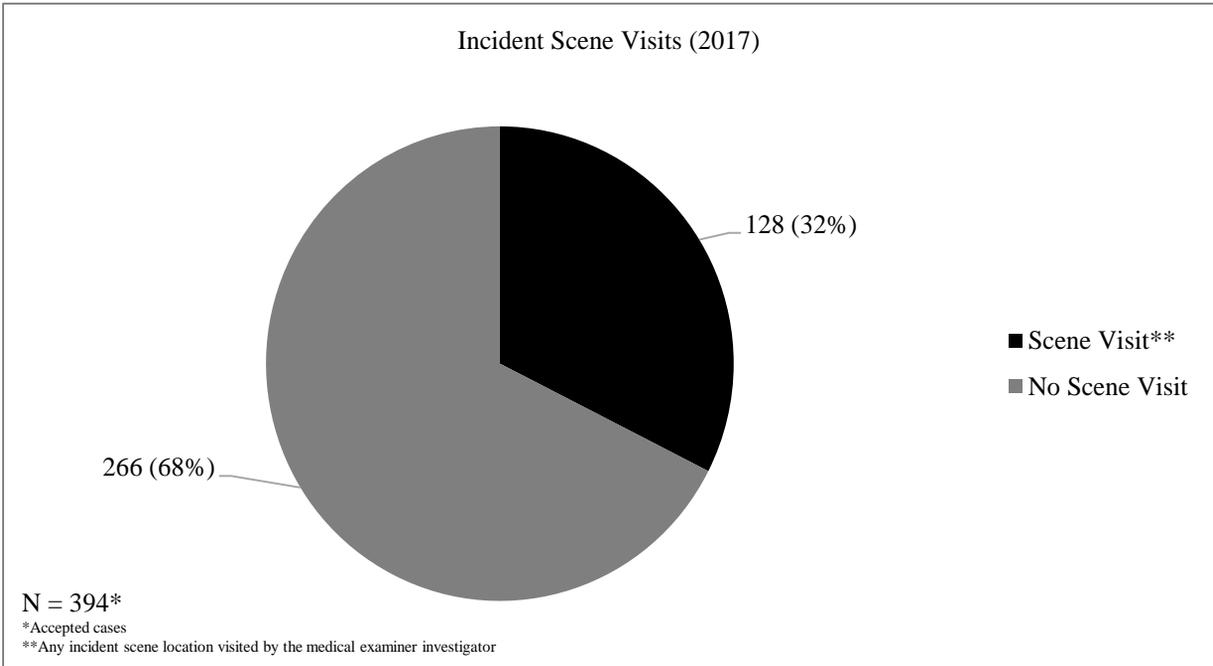


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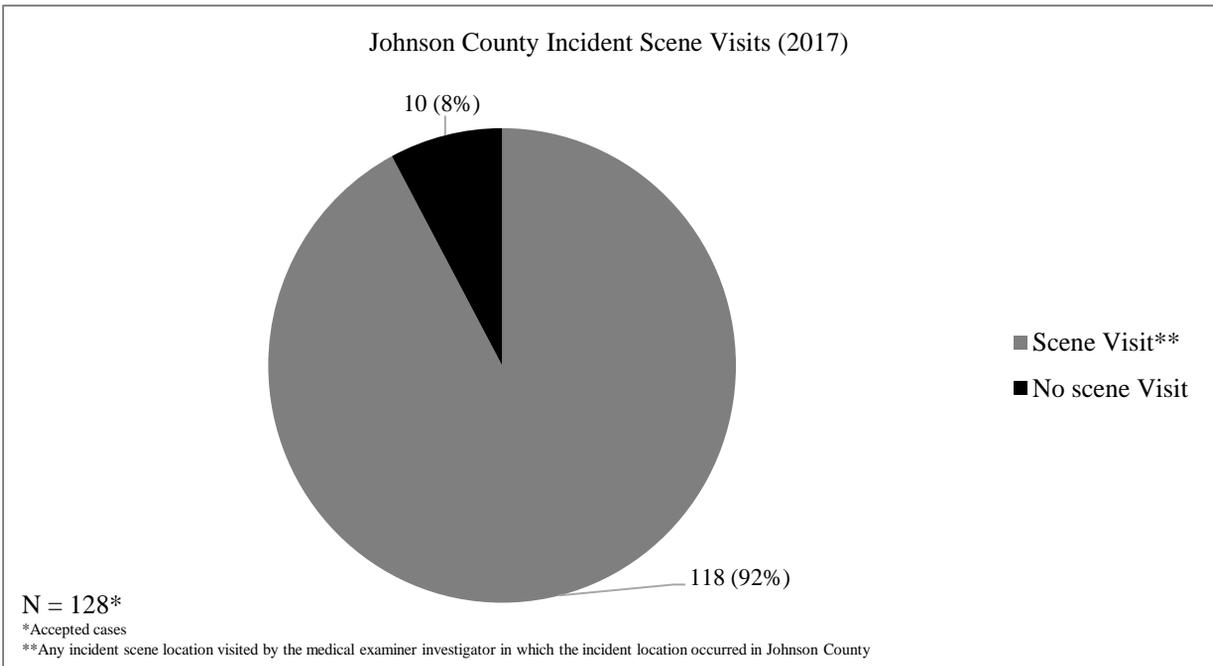


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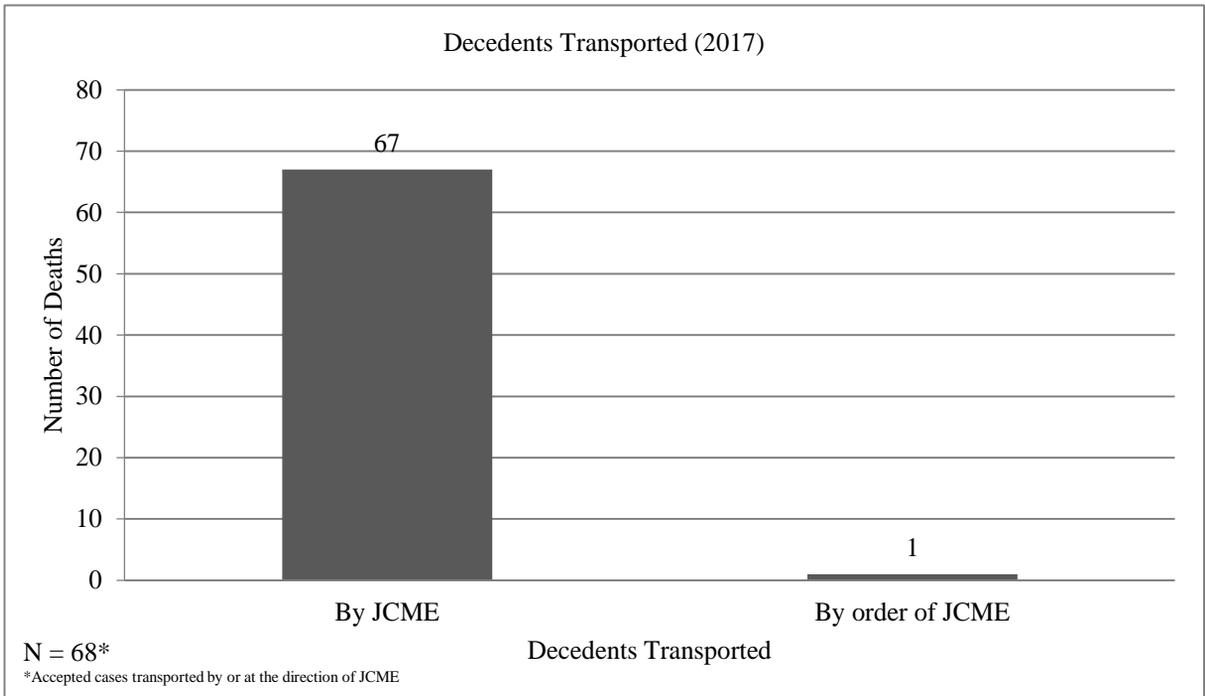


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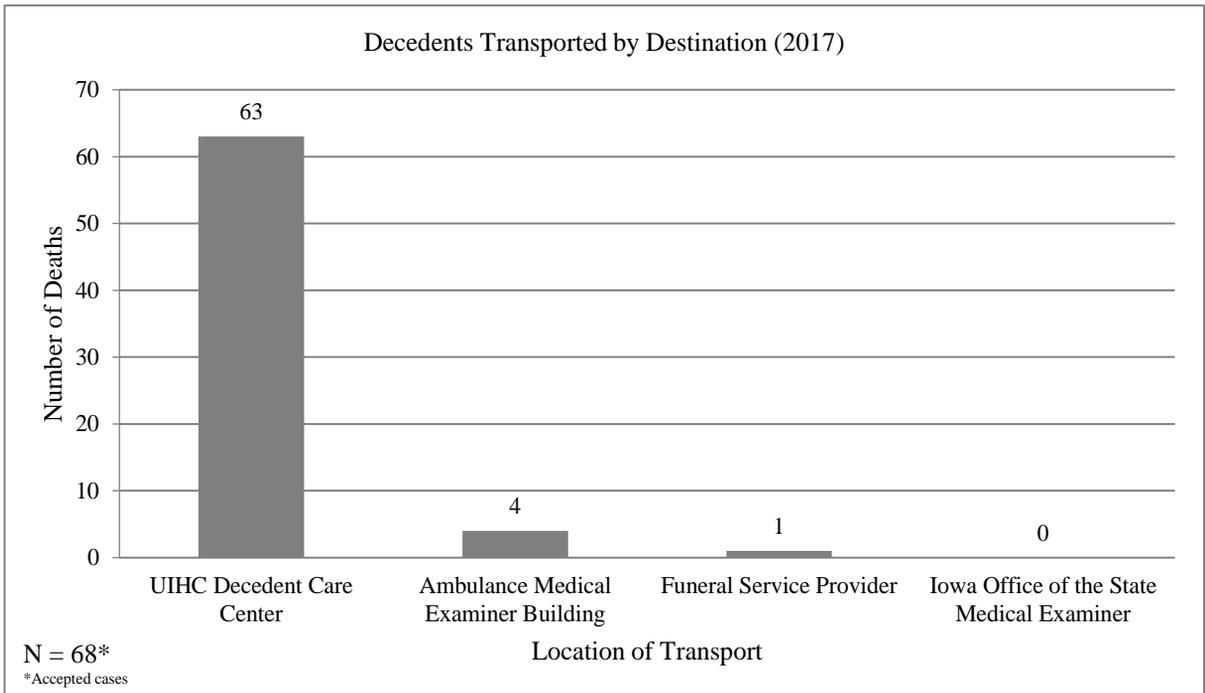


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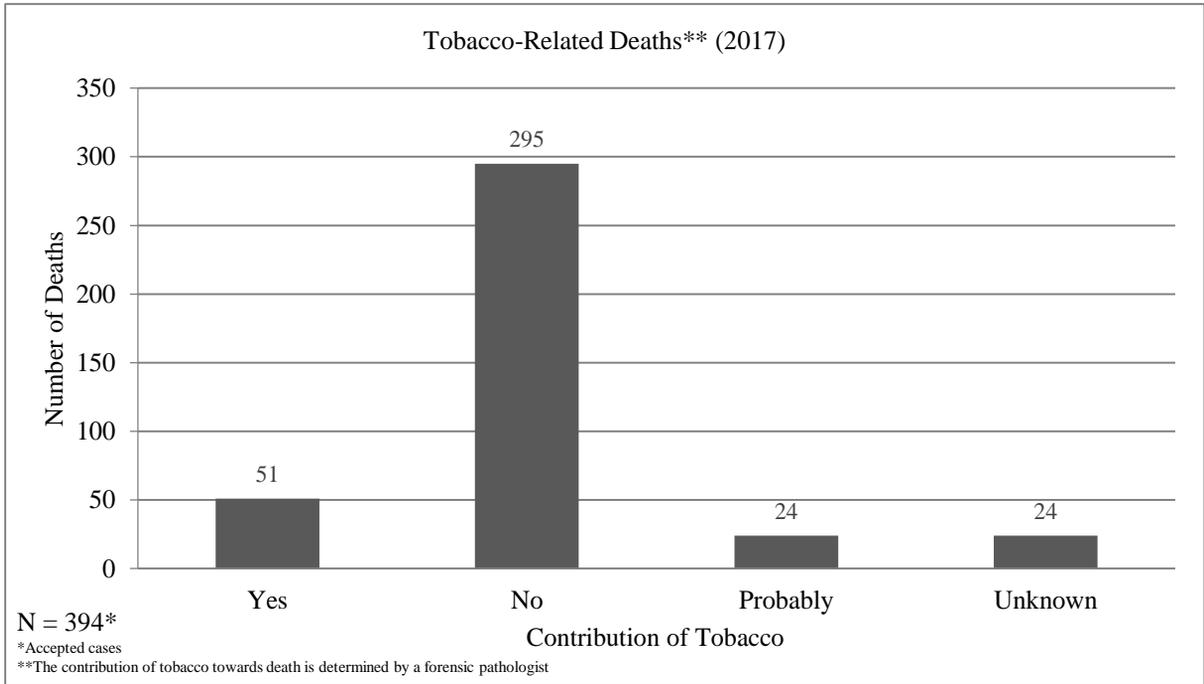


Figure 1.19.

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Autopsies

In 2017, 137 autopsies were ordered by JCME. All JCME ordered autopsies were performed at UIHC and were complete autopsies. No partial autopsies were performed in 2017.

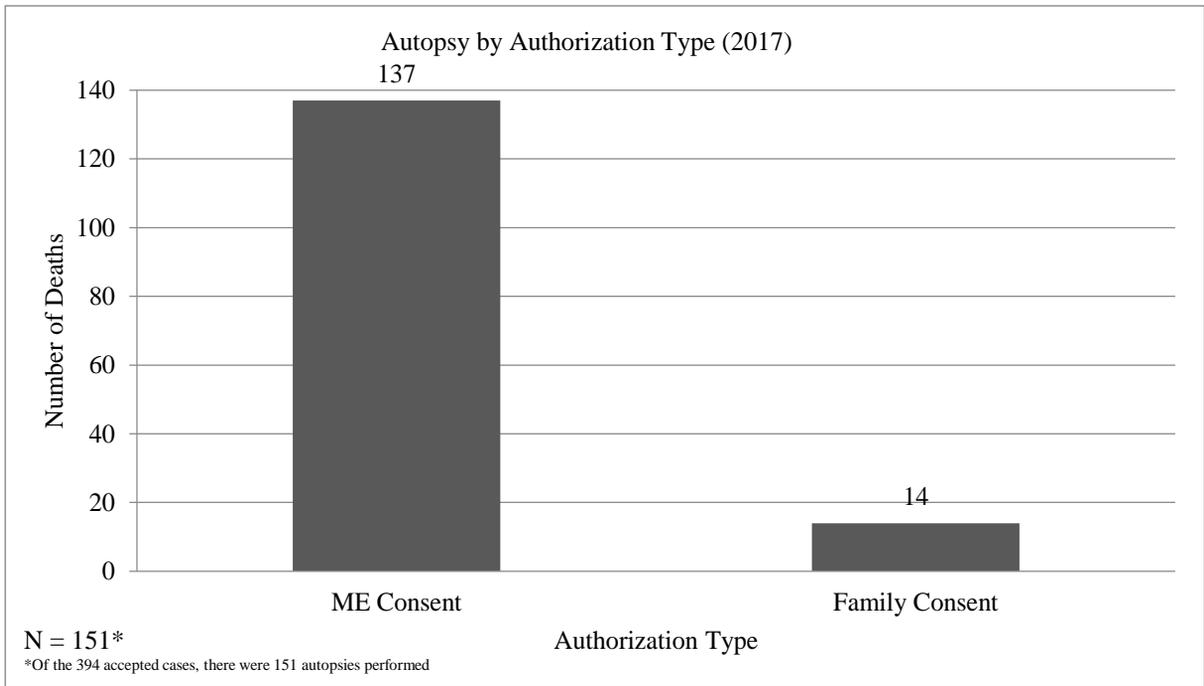


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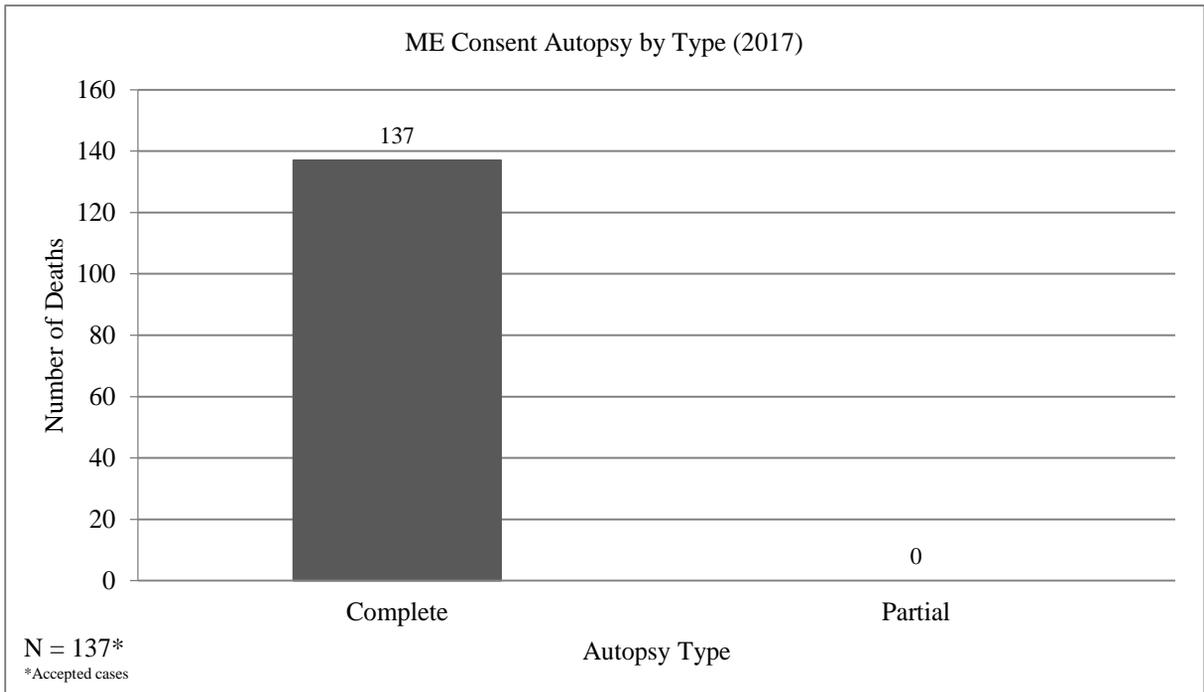


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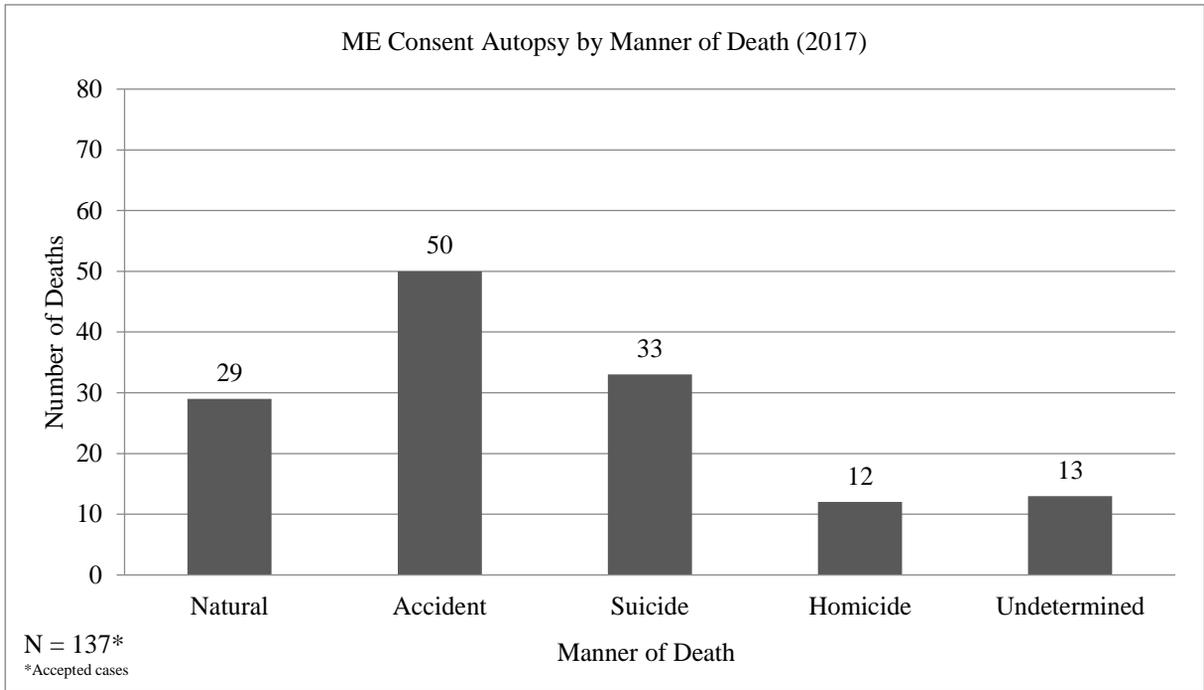


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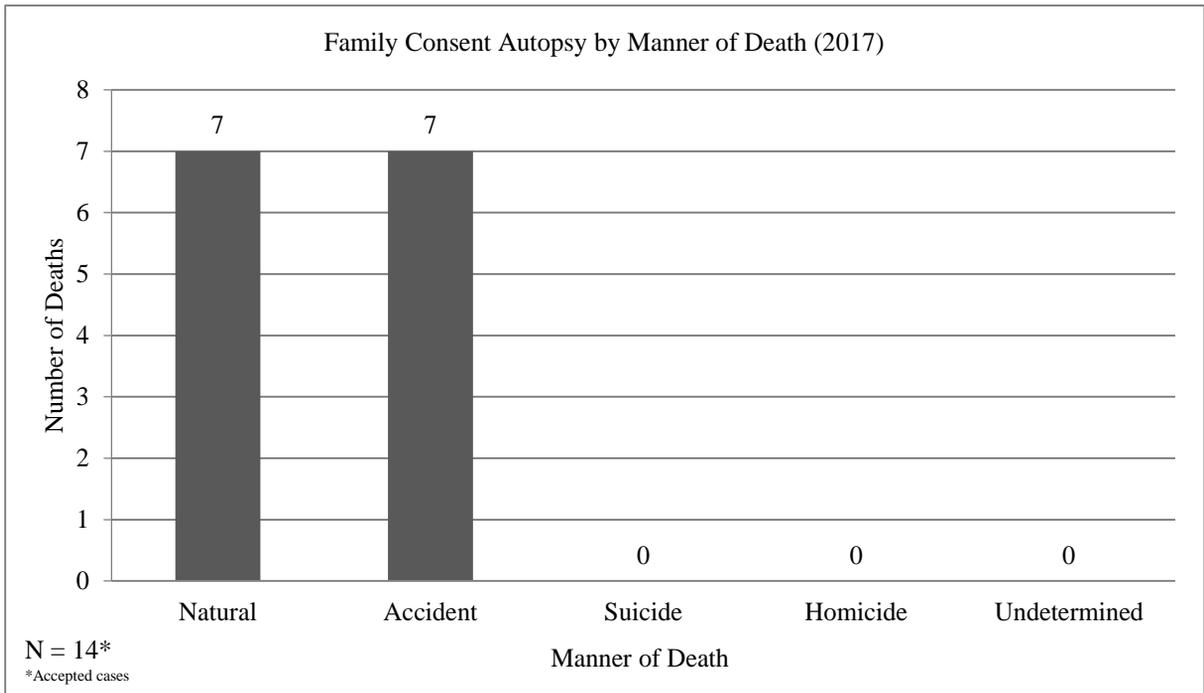


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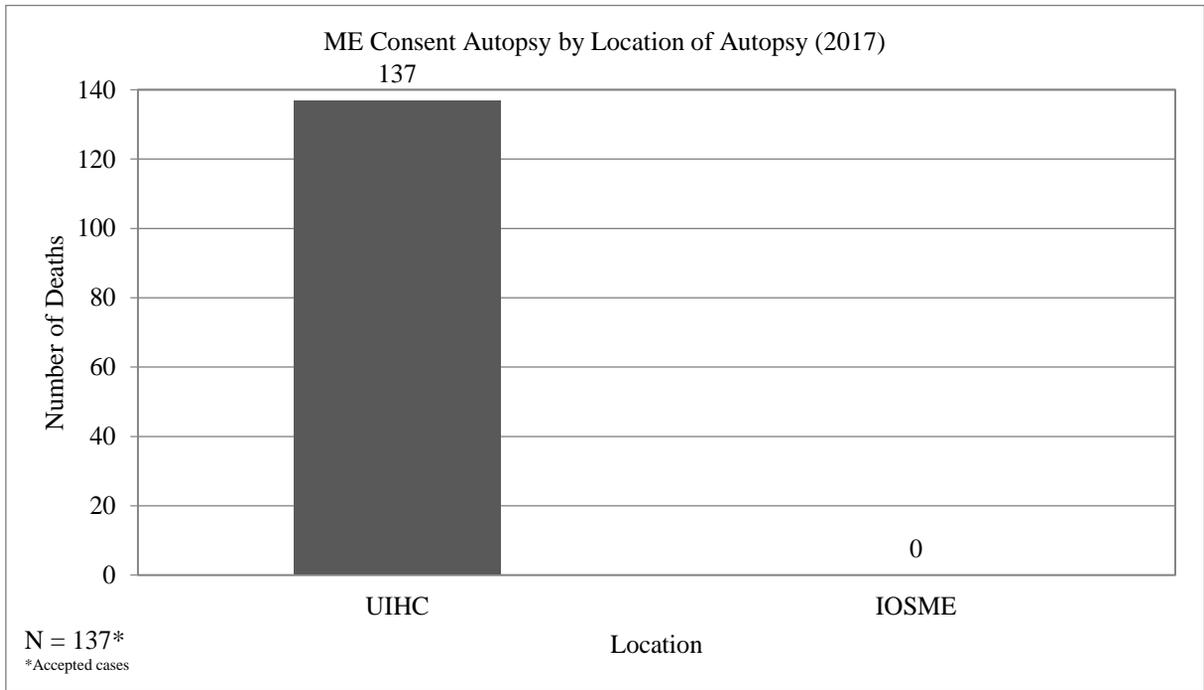


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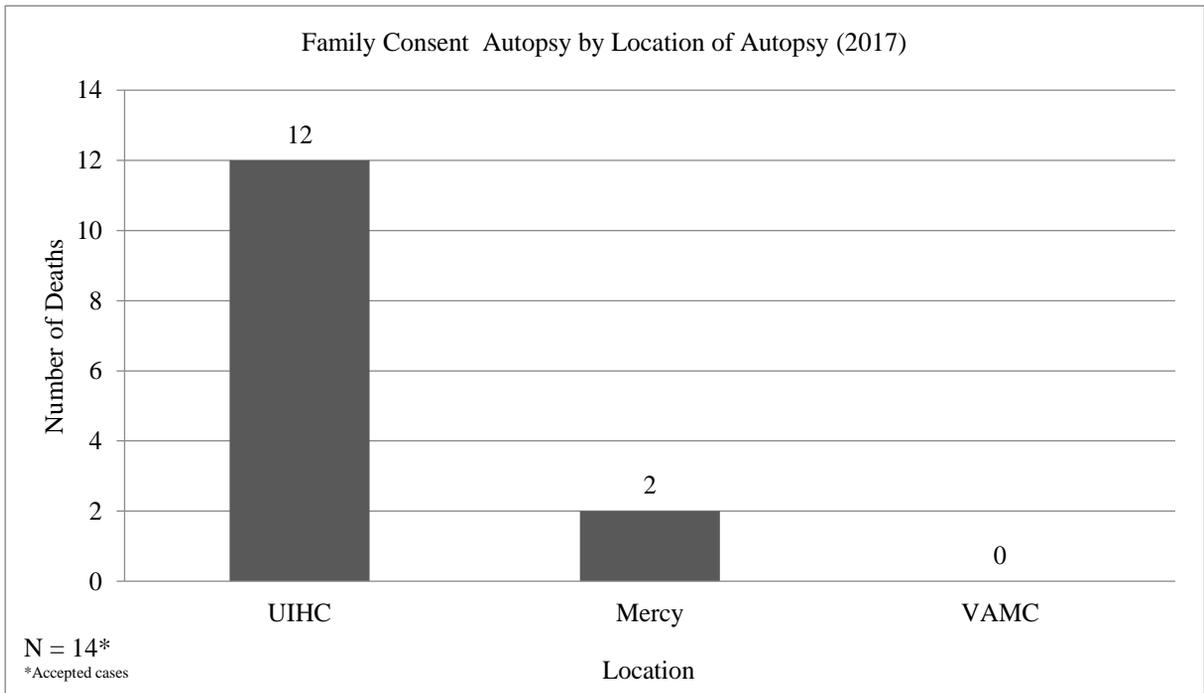


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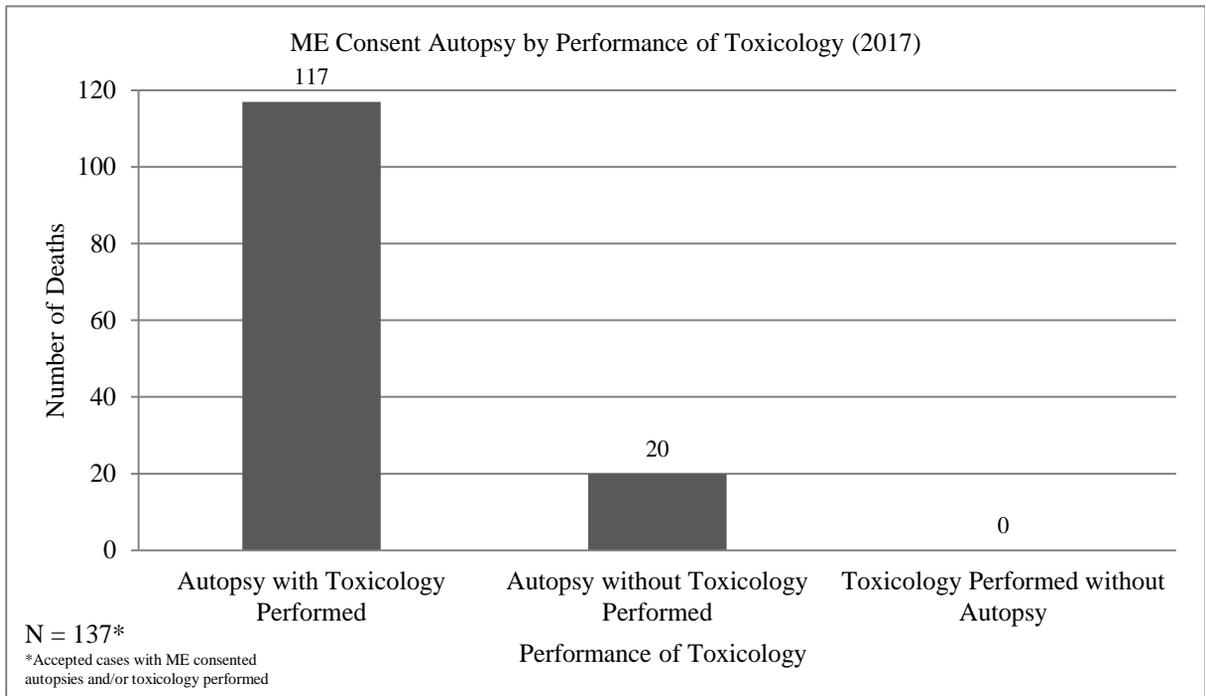


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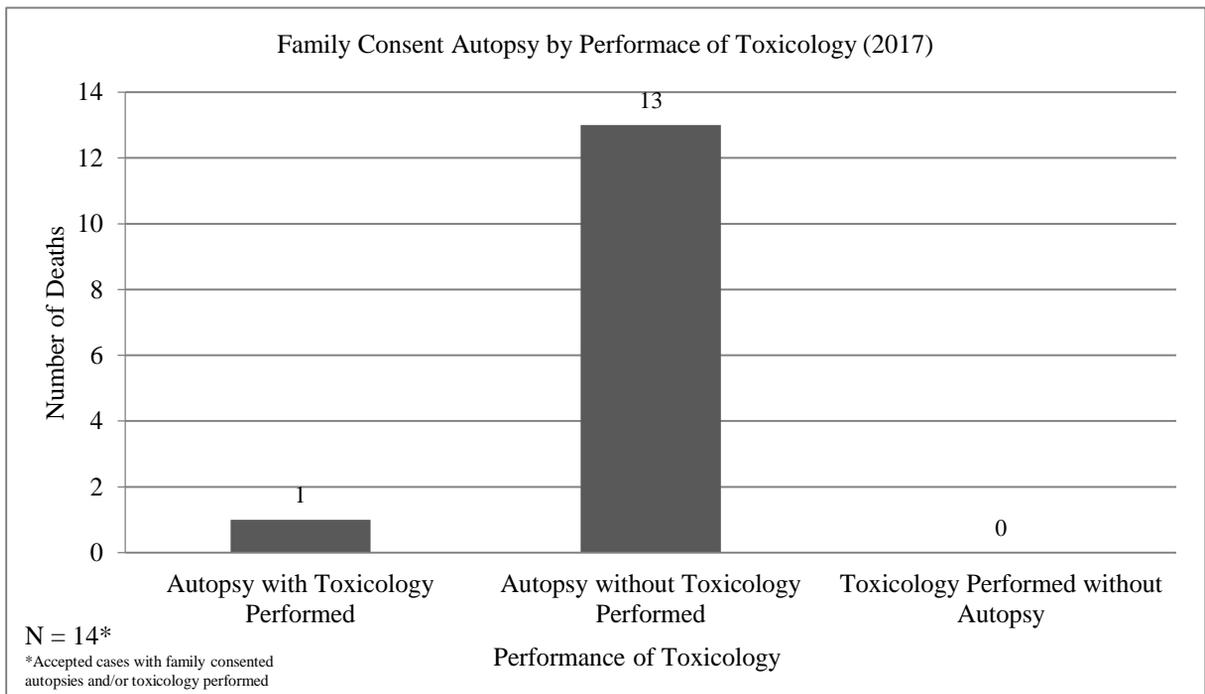


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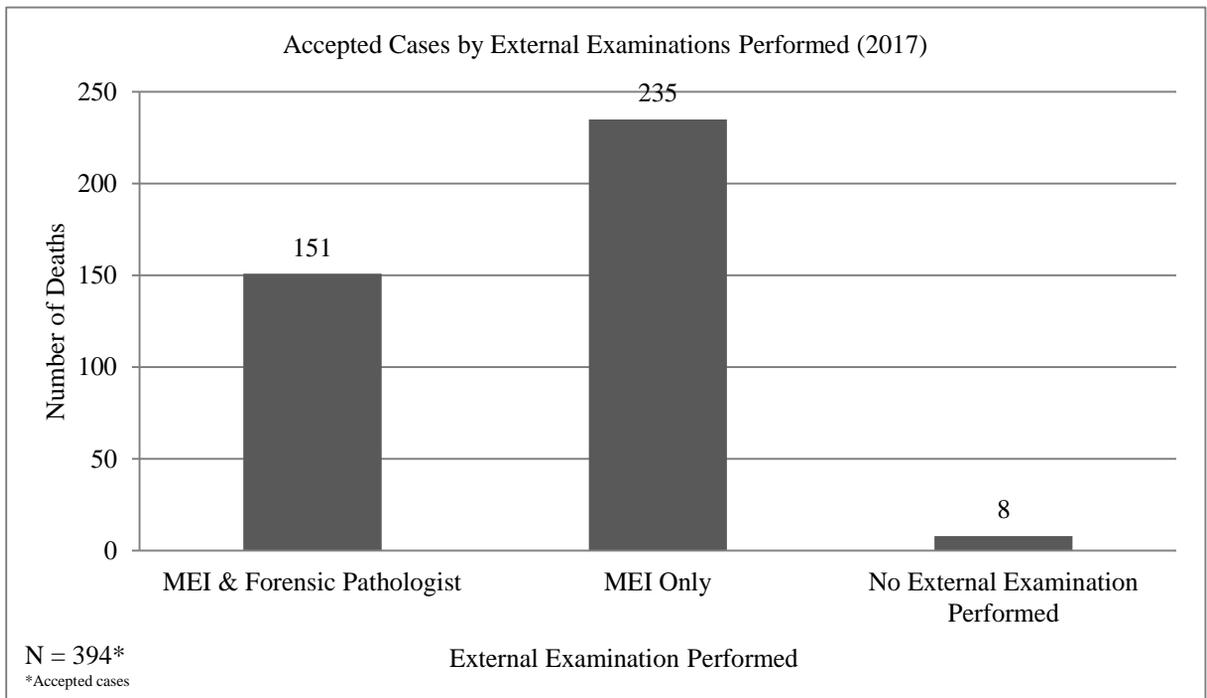


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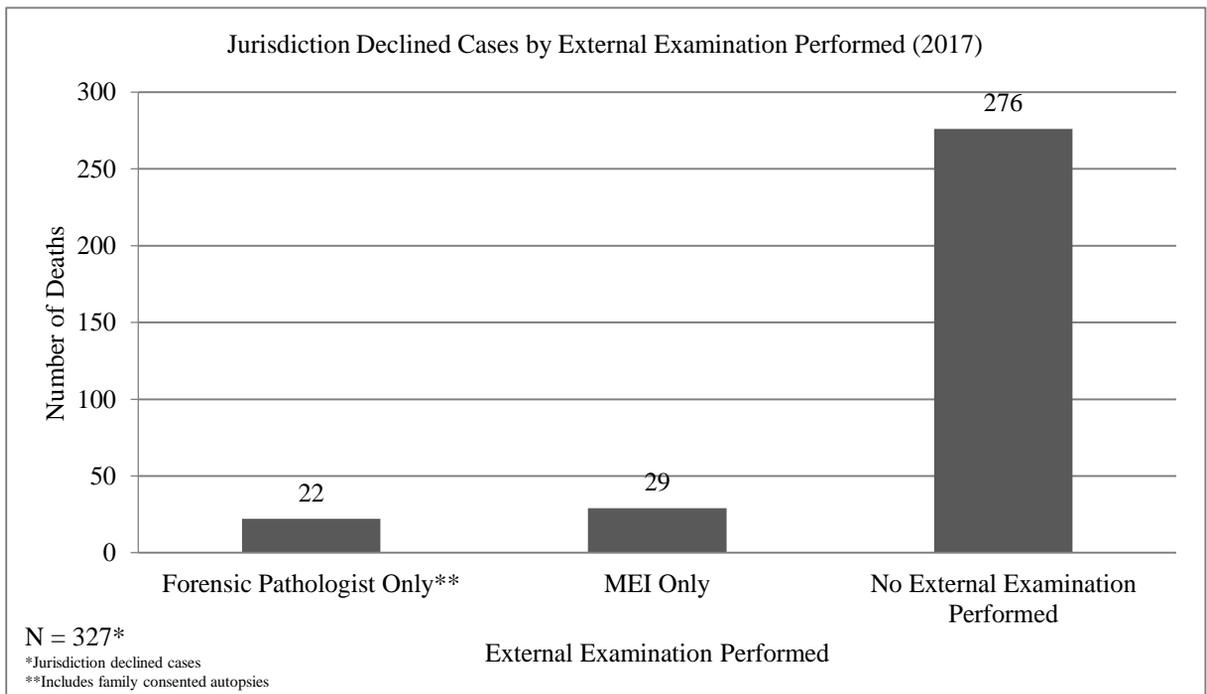


Figure 2.10.

Causes of Death for Each Manner of Death

The causes of death for each manner of death is a cross index of categories used for statistical information retrieval.

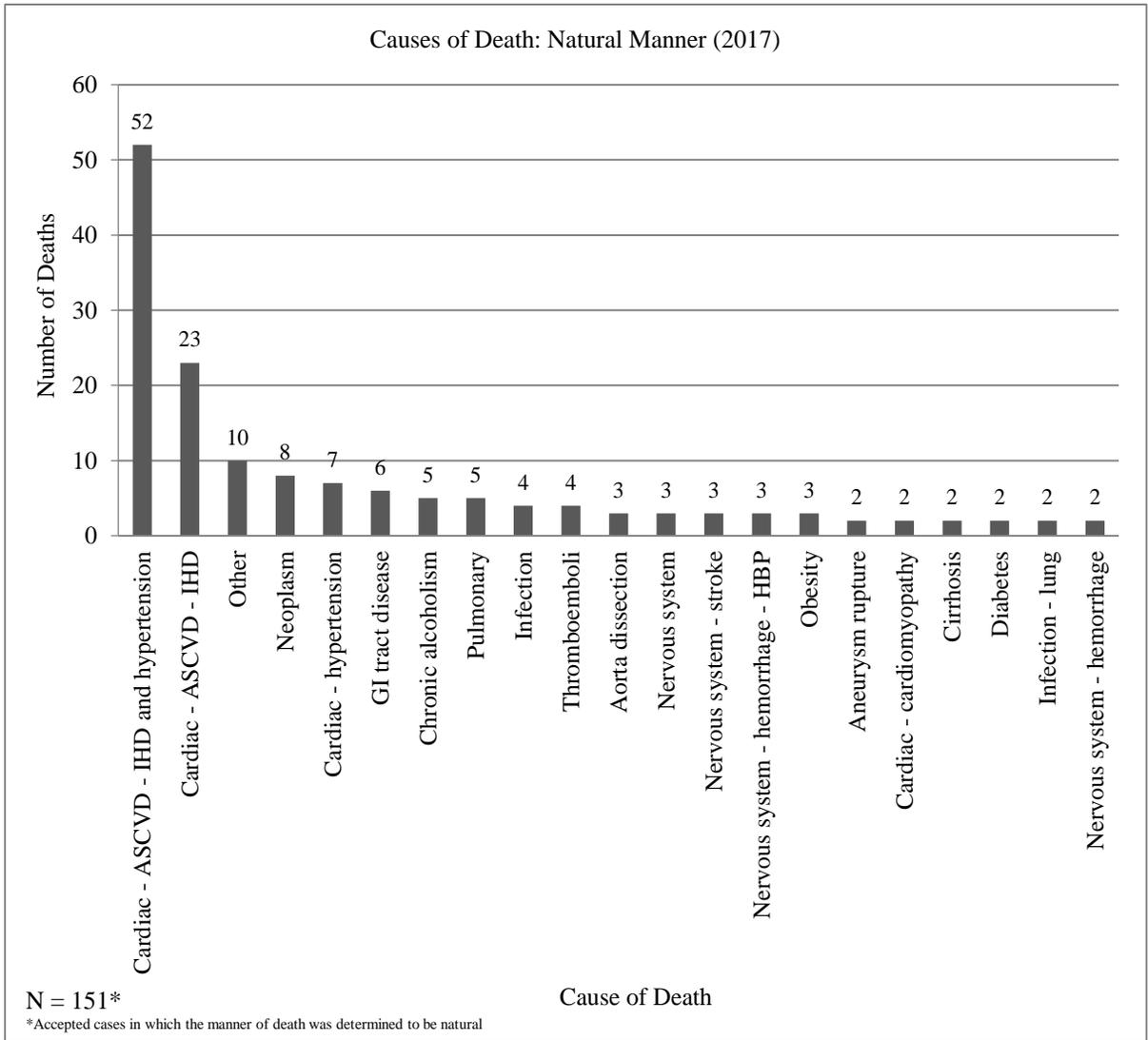


Figure 3.1.

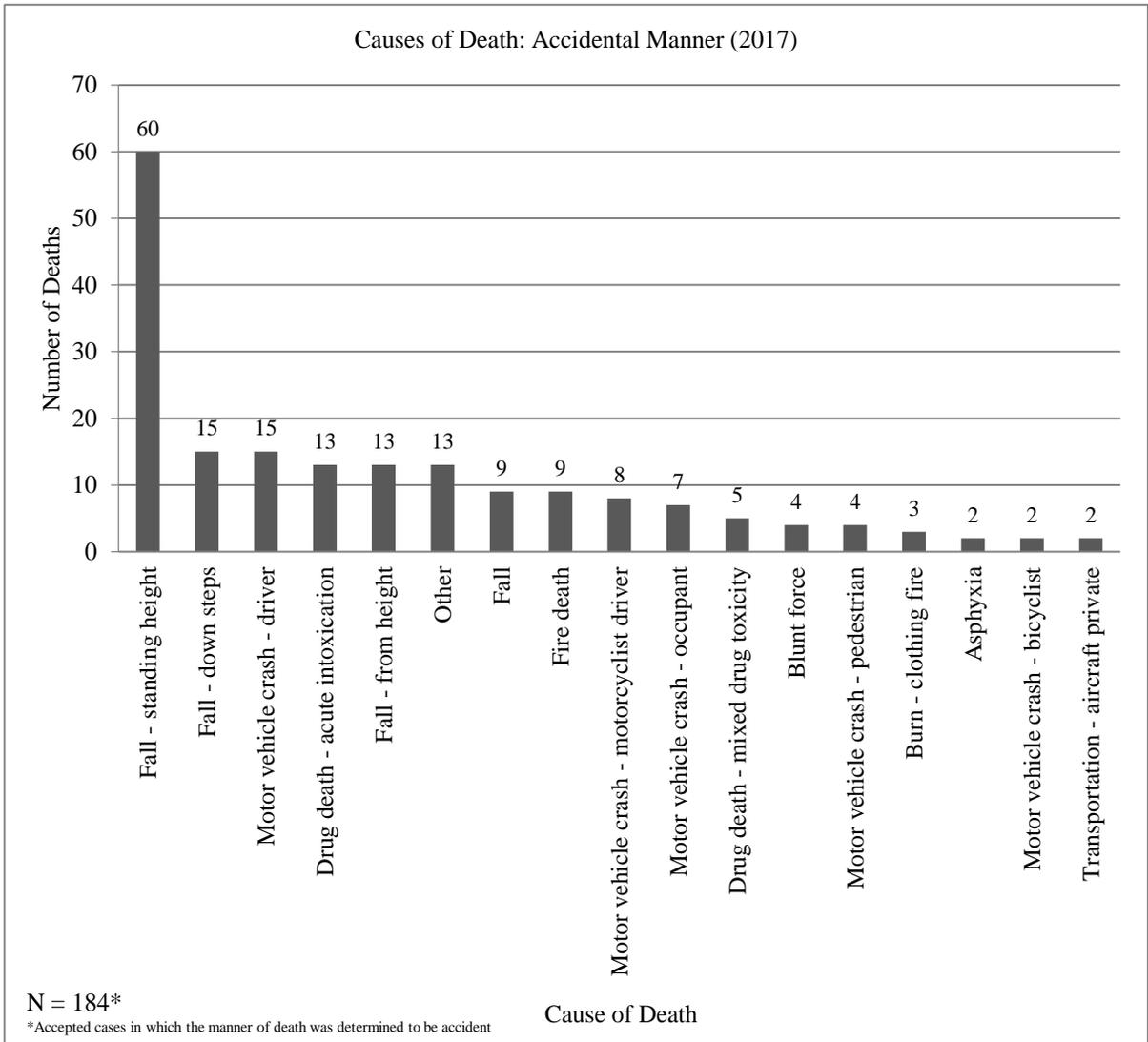


Figure 3.2.

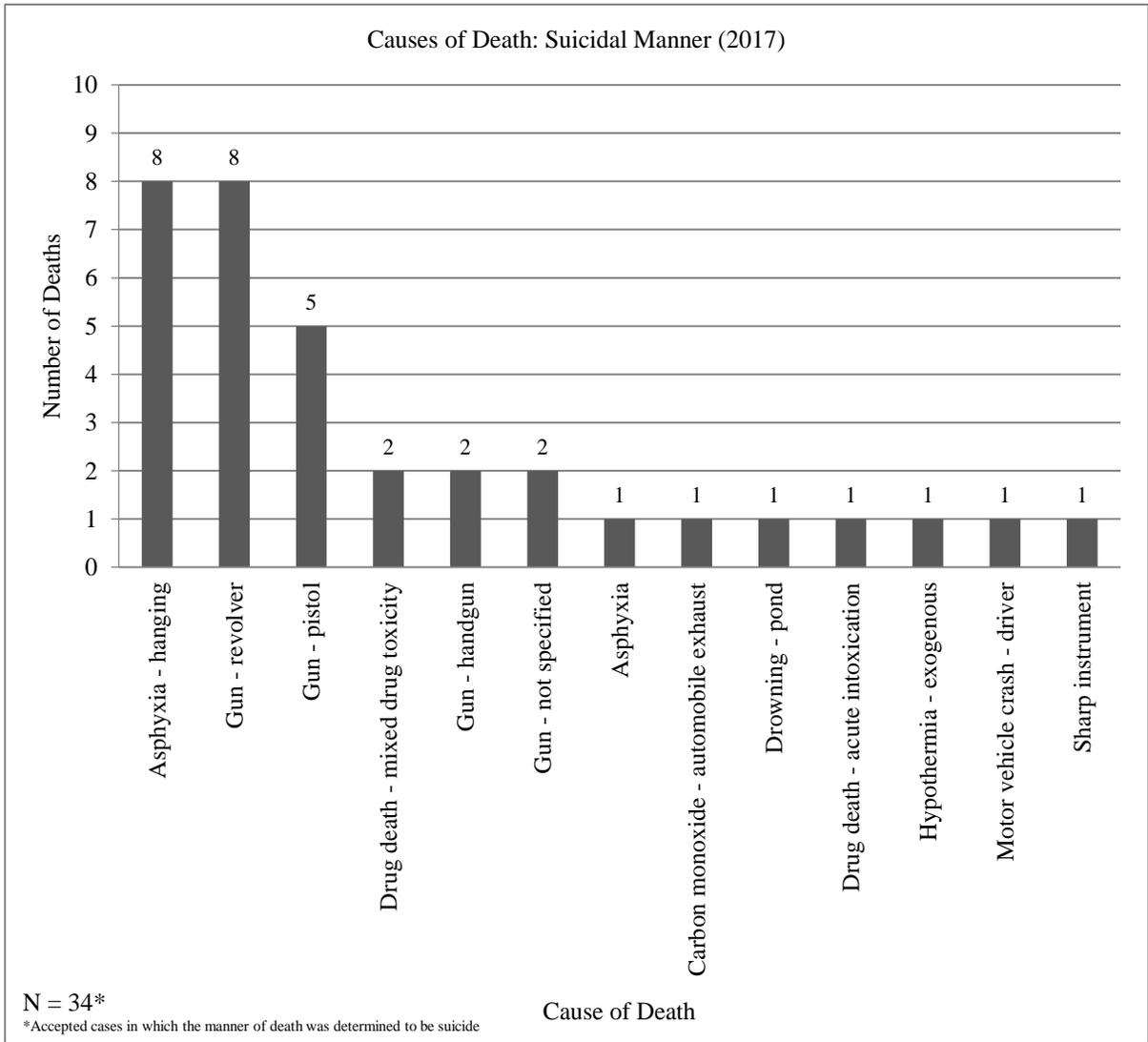


Figure 3.3.

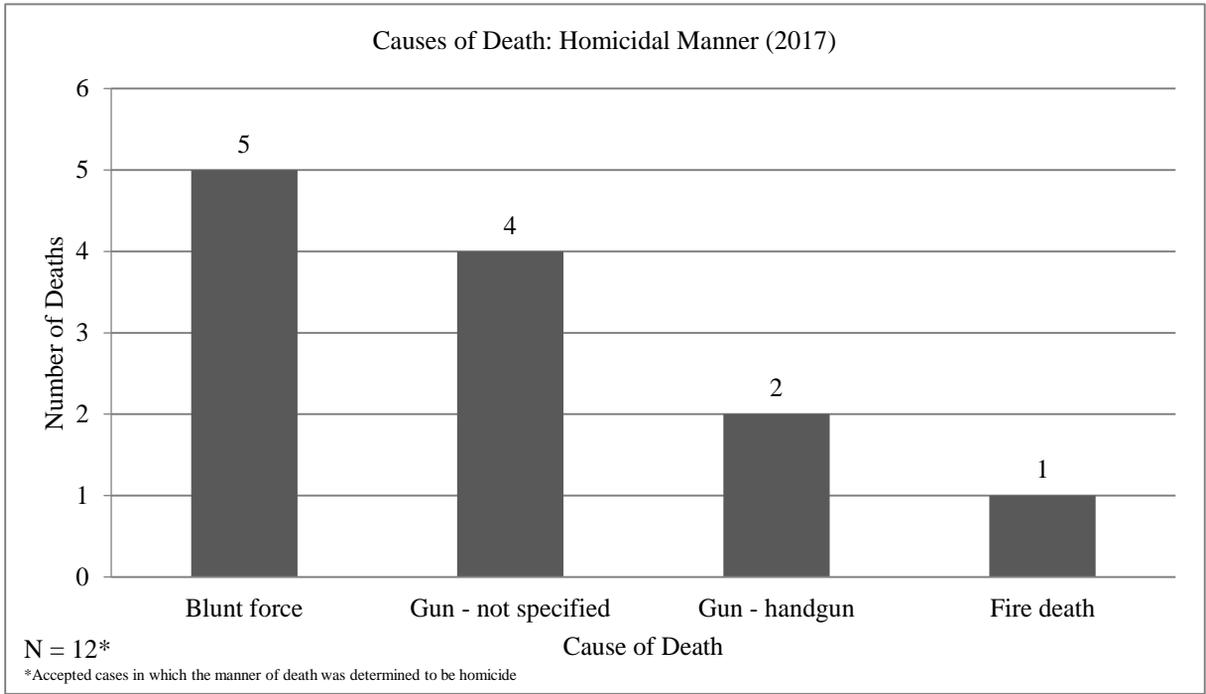


Figure 3.4.

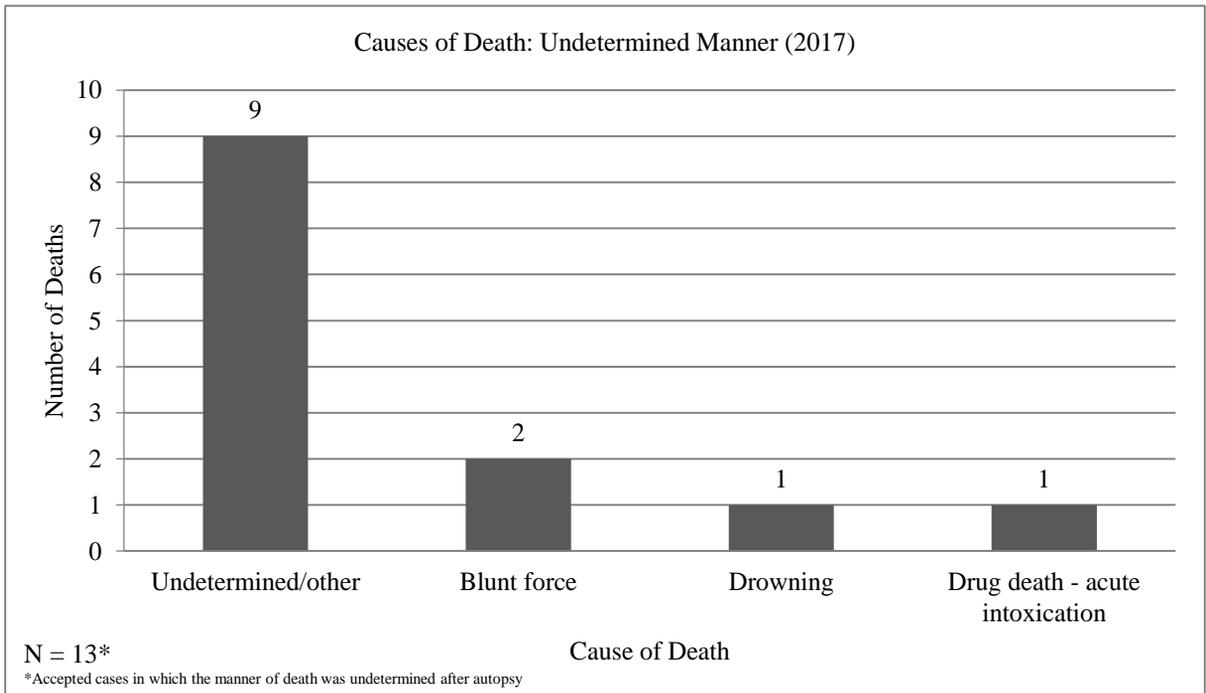


Figure 3.5.

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Accidents

Of the 394 deaths accepted by JCME, 184 were classified as accident. The sex distribution was 115 males to 69 females. Sixty of these deaths were the result of a fall from standing height, 15 were the result of a fall down stairs, and 15 were due to a motor vehicle crash in which the driver was deceased. The most common age range was 80-89 (37 decedents), followed closely by 70-79 (36 decedents).

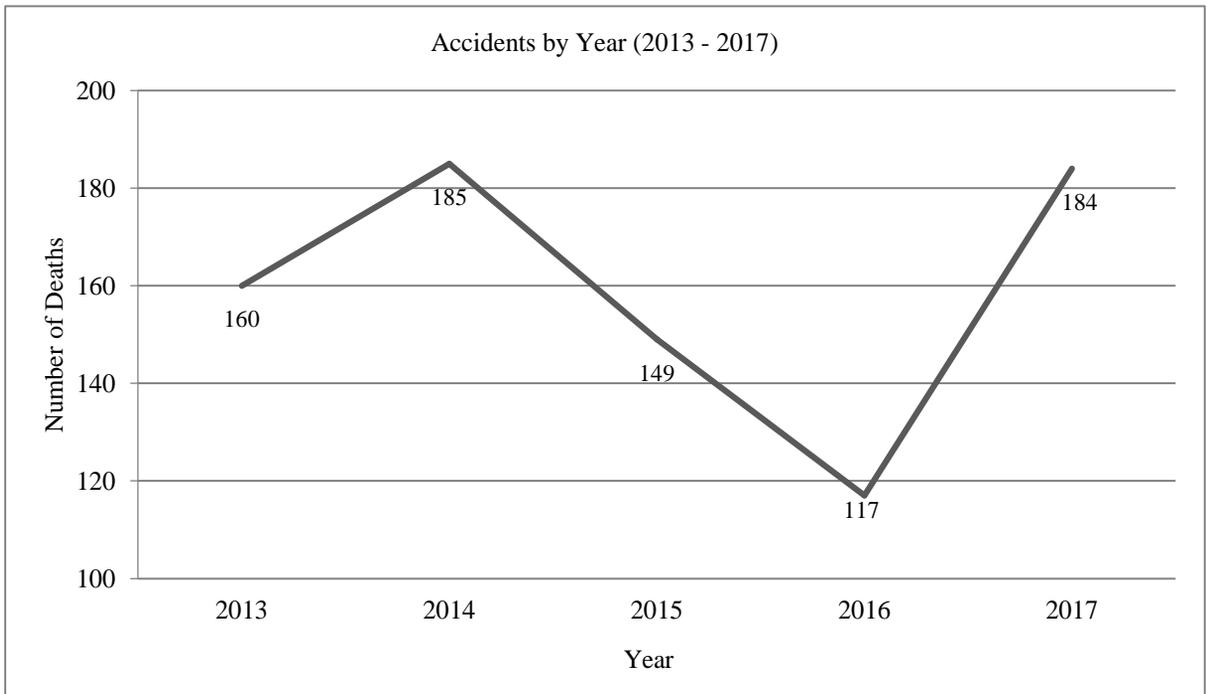


Figure 4.1.

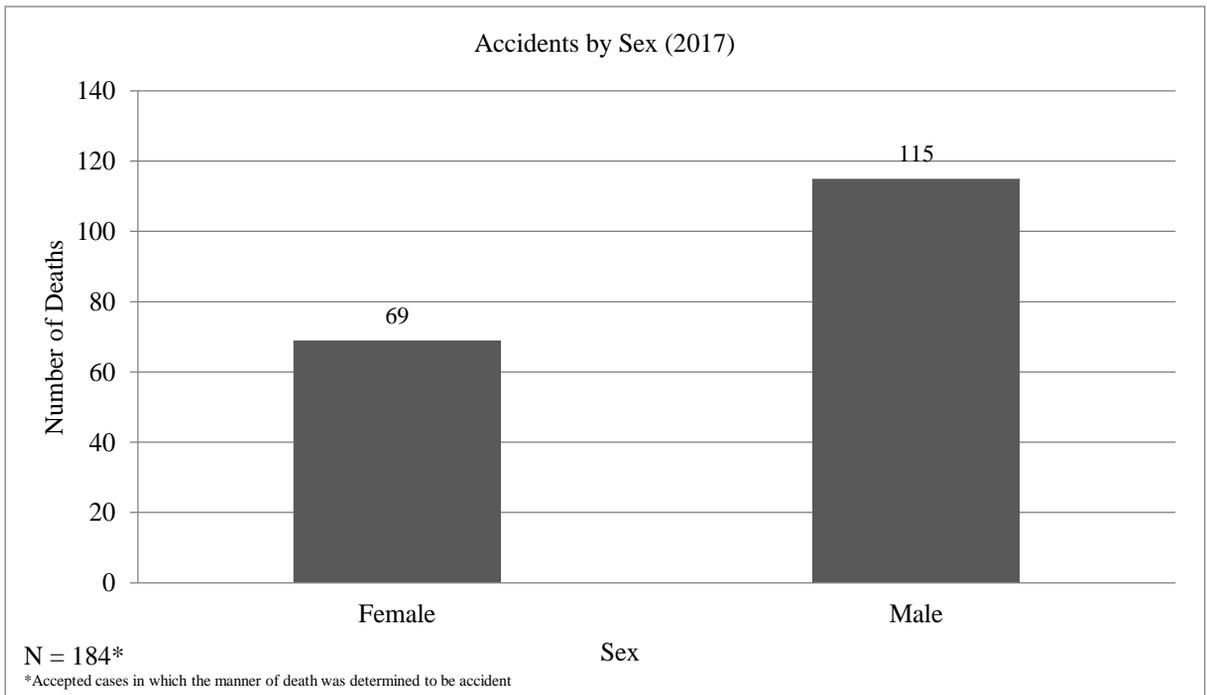


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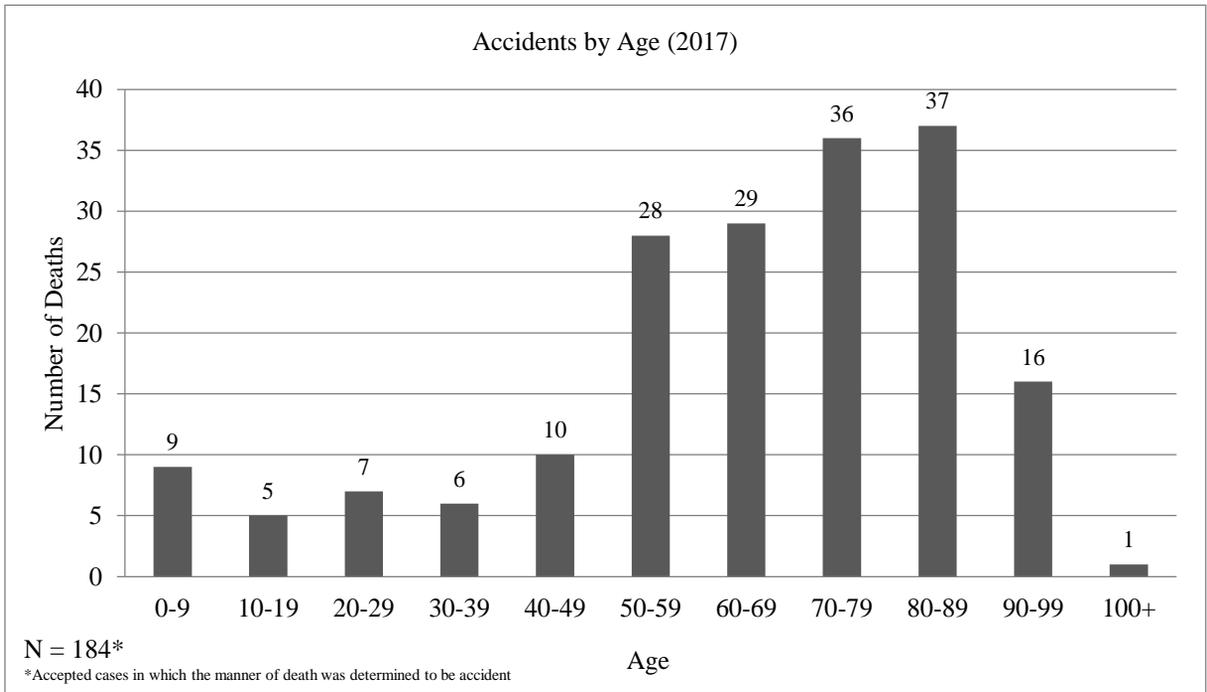


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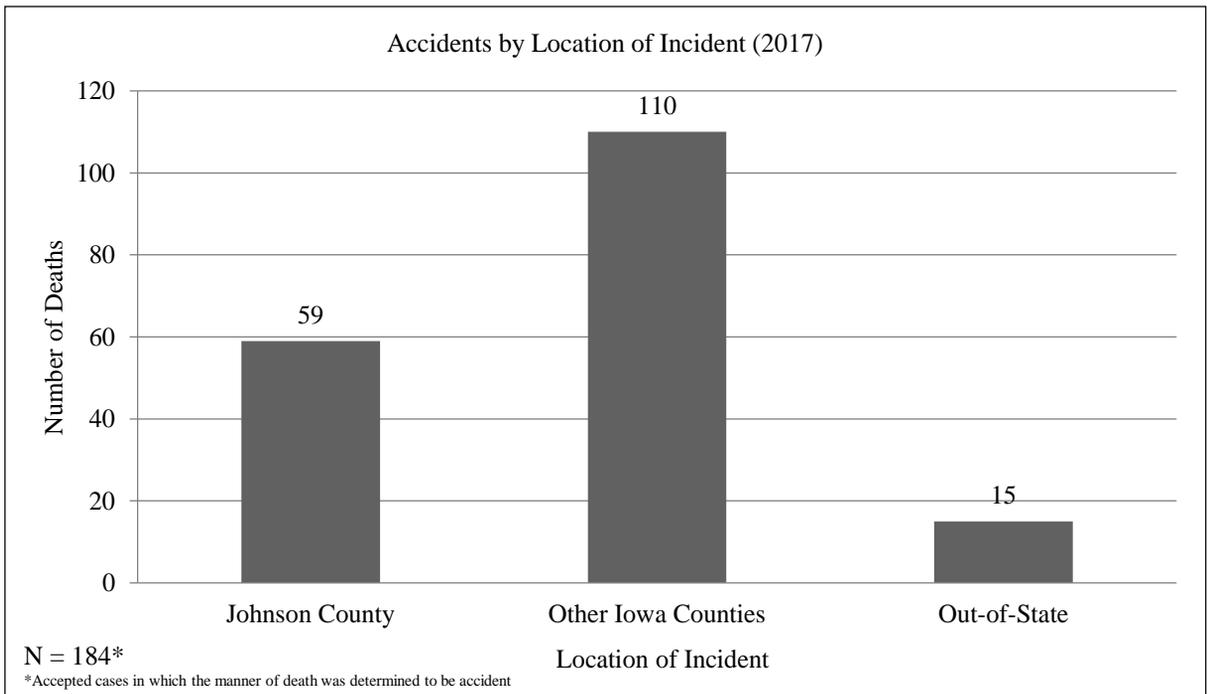


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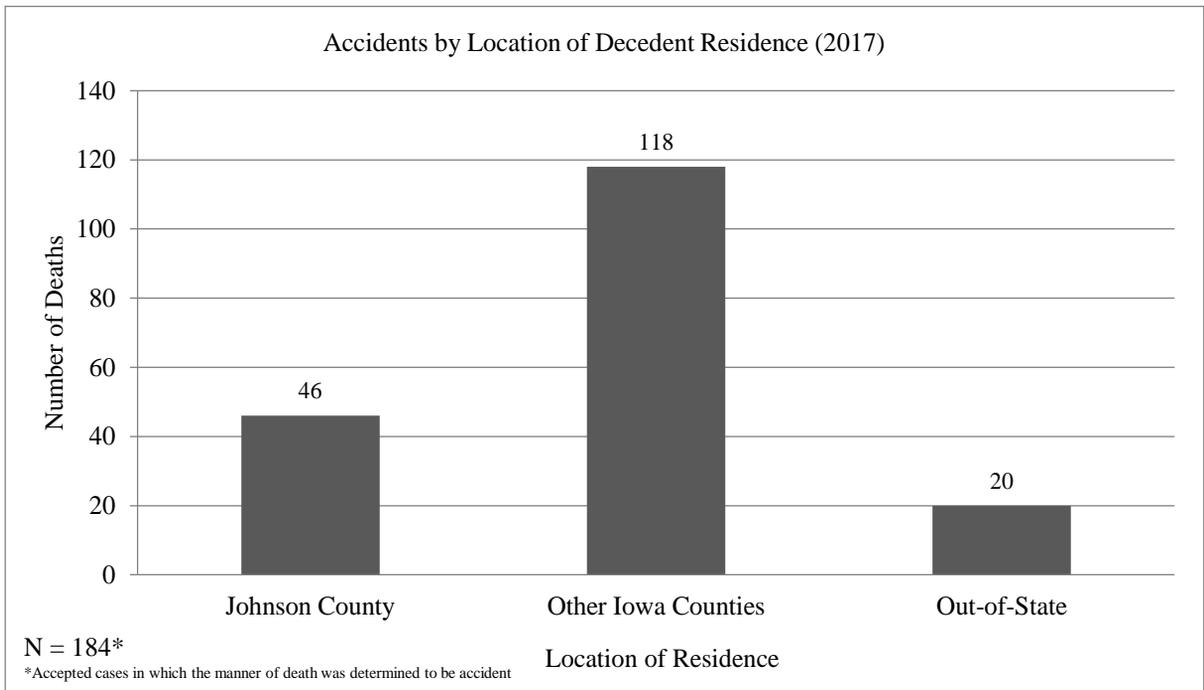


Figure 4.5.

Suicides

Of the 394 deaths accepted and investigated by JCME, 24 were classified as suicide. Seventeen of these deaths were the result of firearms and 8 were due to hanging. The sex distribution was 28 males and 6 females. The most common age range was 40 to 49 years (8 decedents), followed by 20 to 29 years (7 decedents).

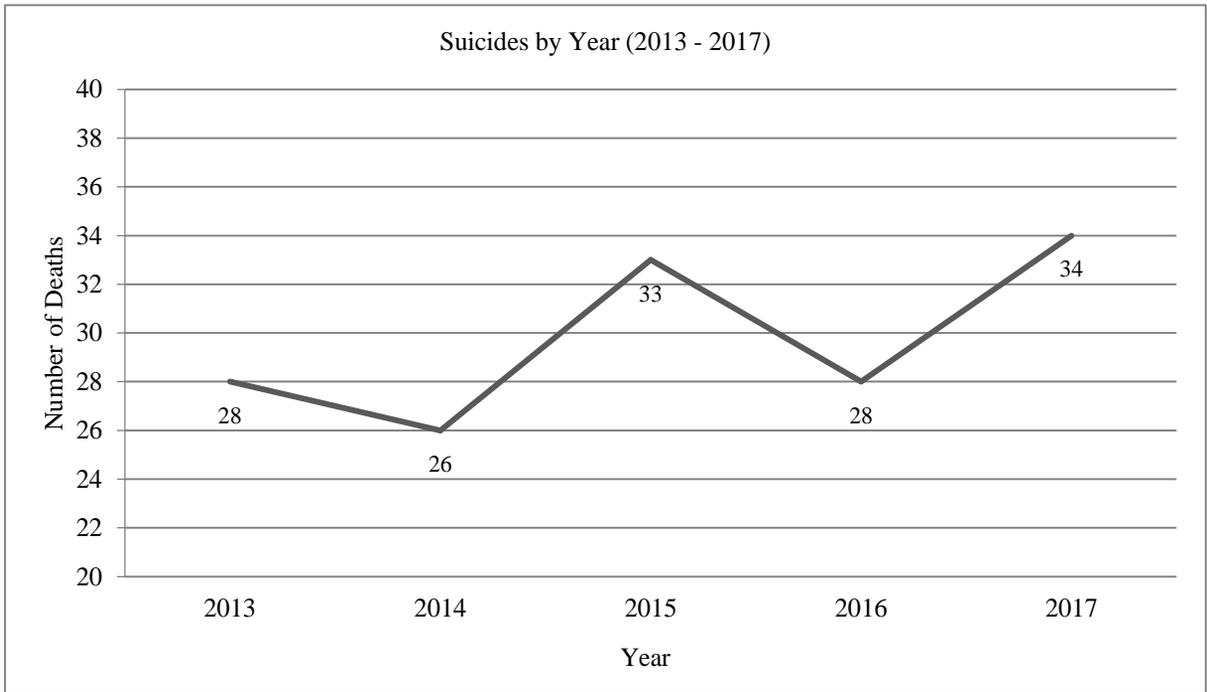


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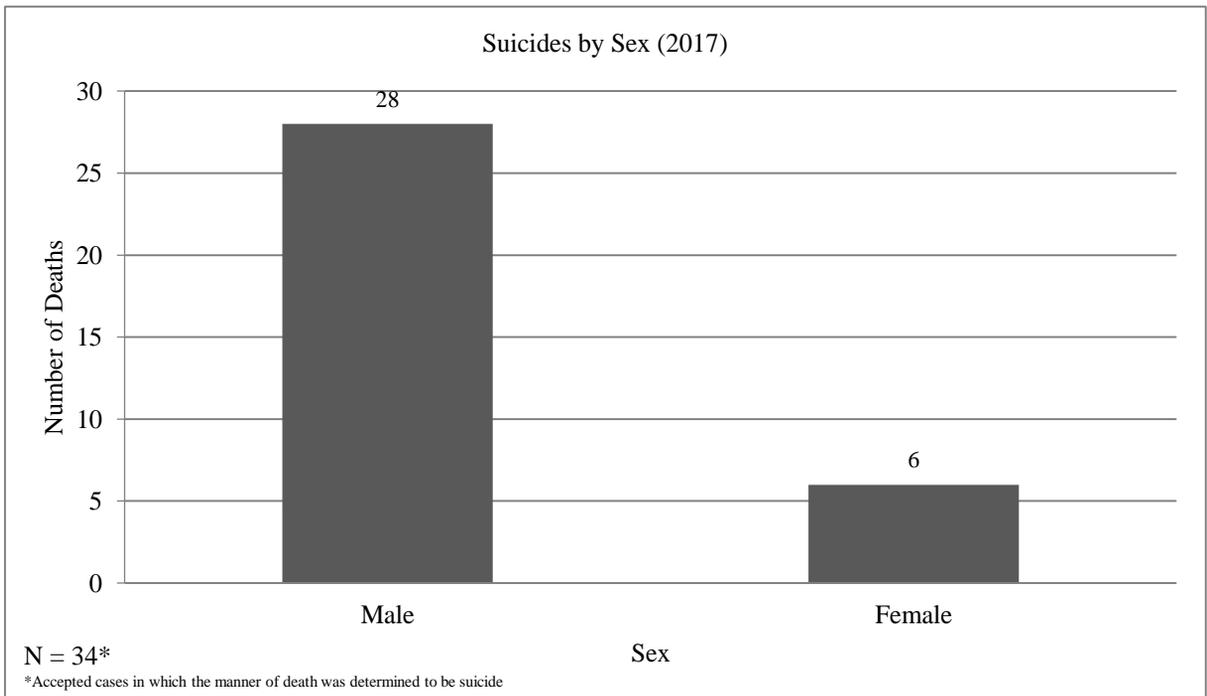


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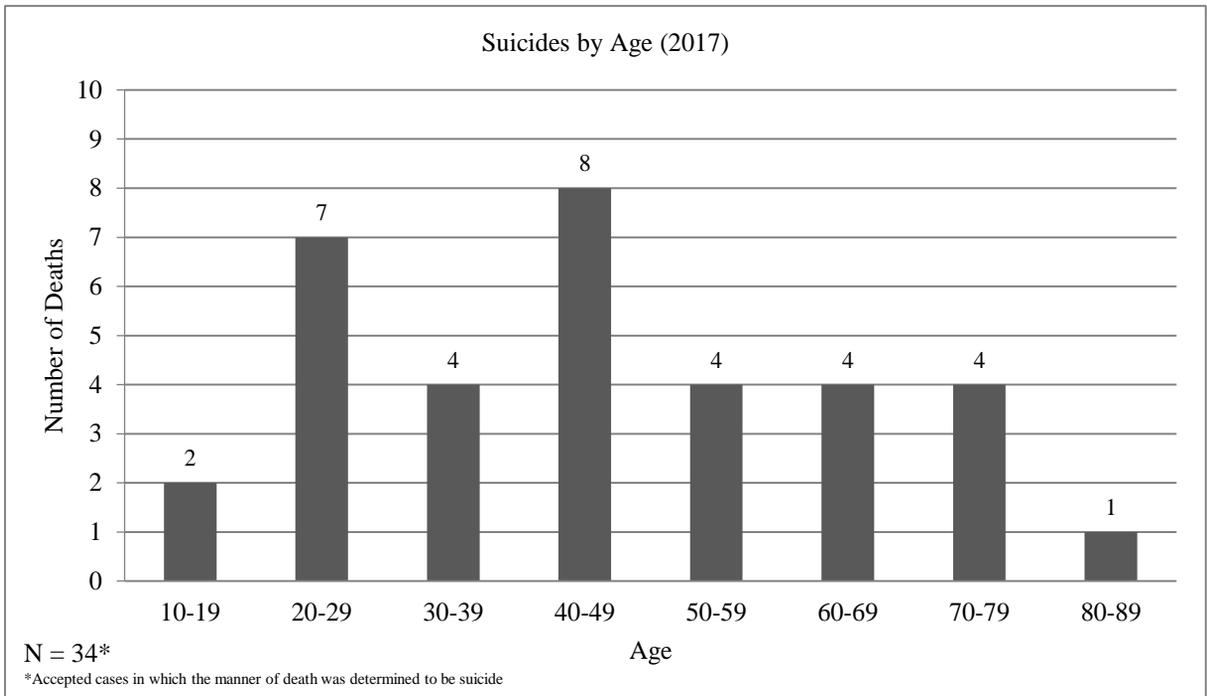


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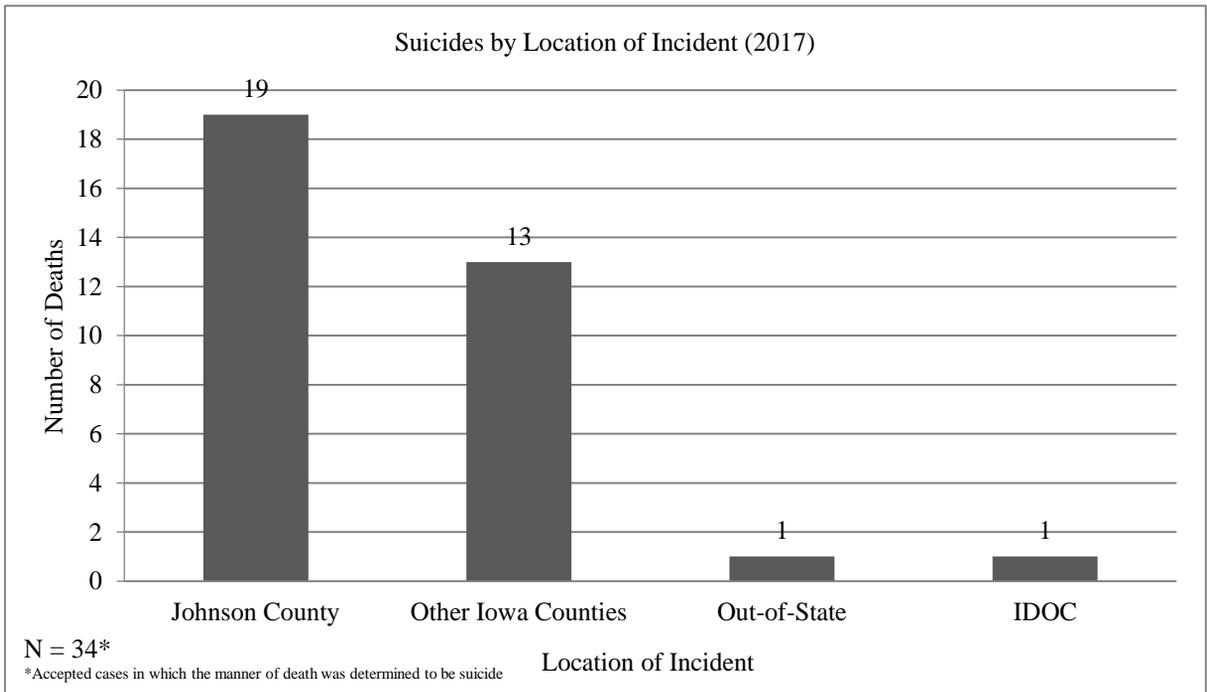


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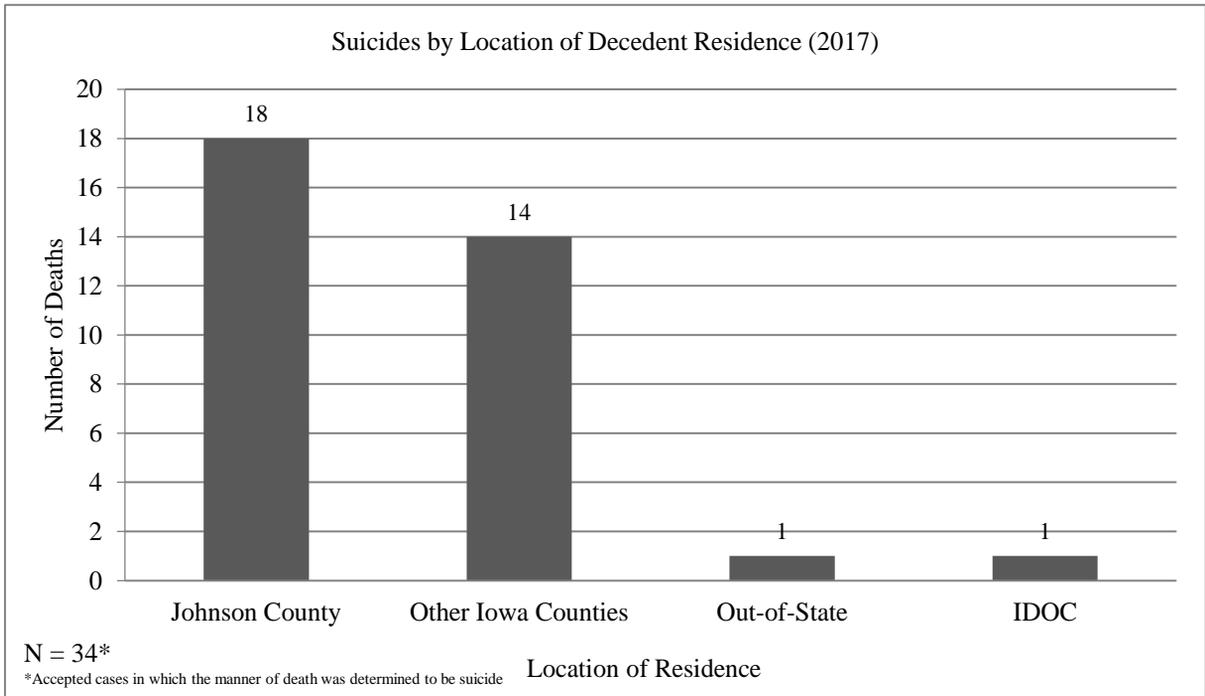


Figure 5.5.

Homicides

Of the 394 deaths accepted and investigated by JCME, 12 were classified as homicide. The sex distribution was 10 males and 2 females. The most common age range was 30 to 39 years (4 decedents) followed by 20 to 29 years (3 decedents). Four of the 12 deaths certified as homicide occurred in Johnson County while the remaining 8 occurred in other Iowa counties.

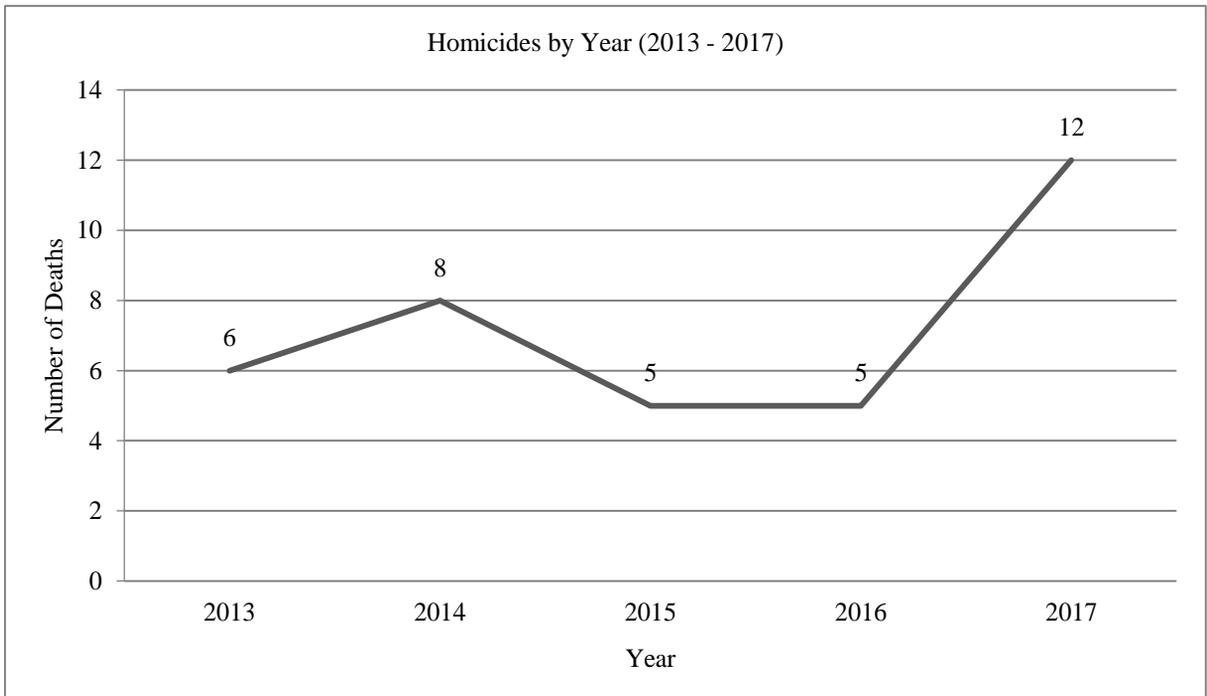


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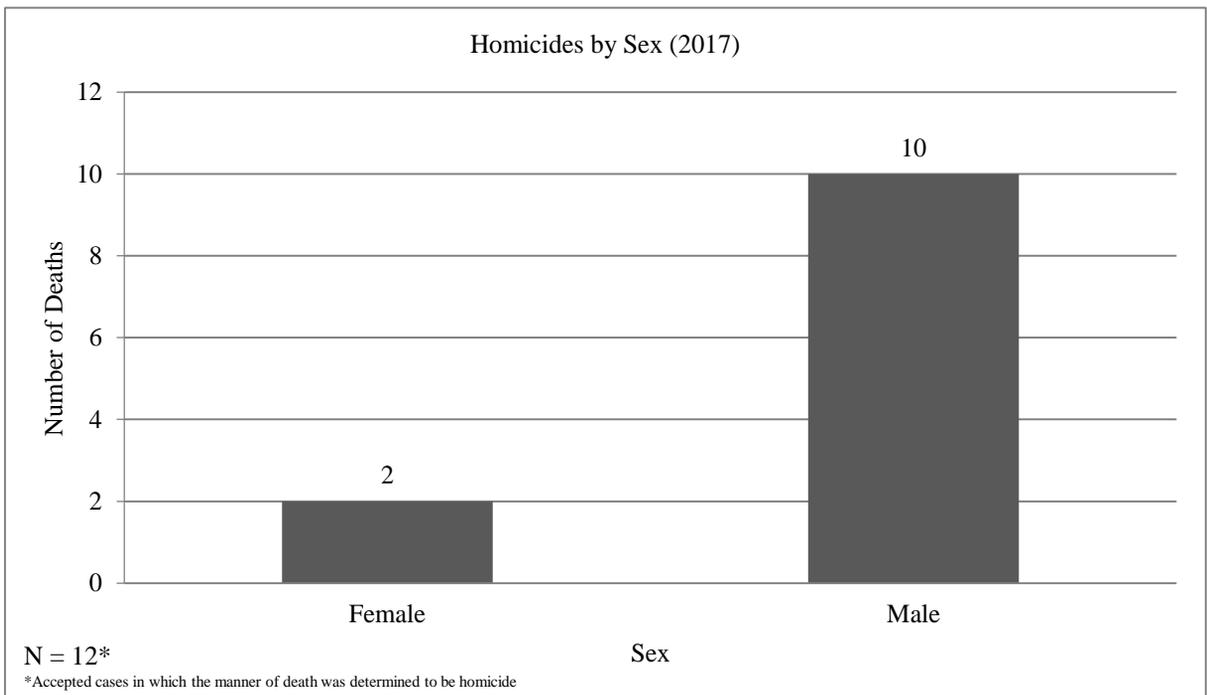


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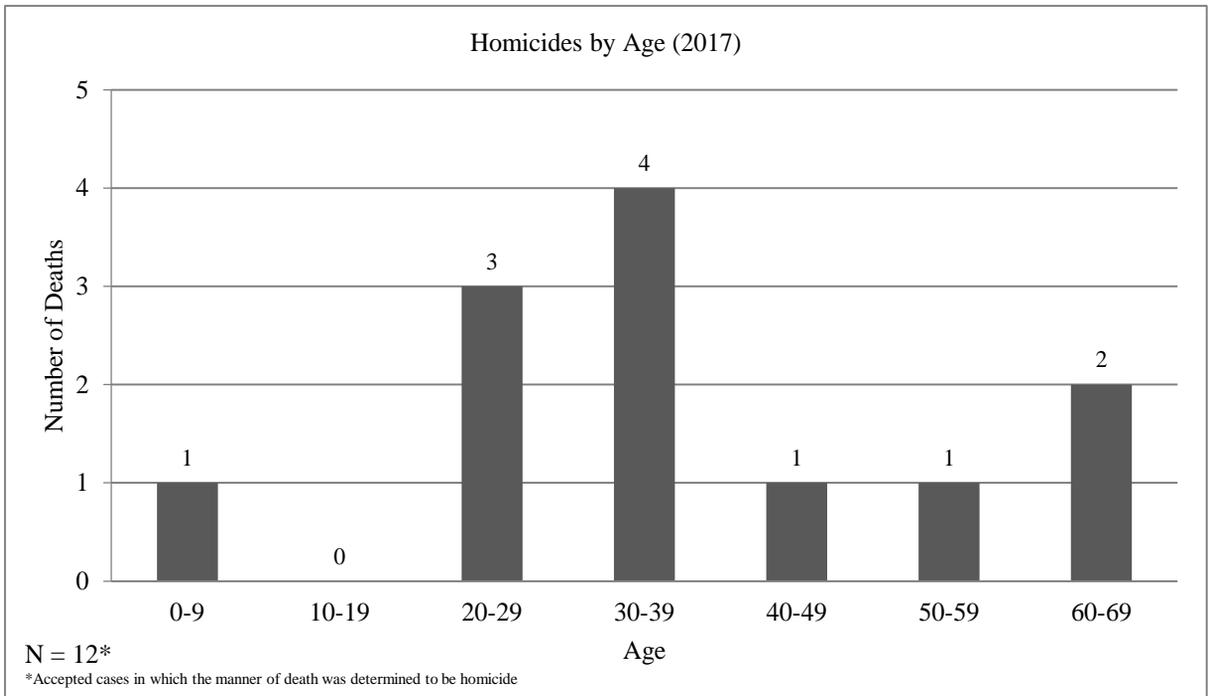


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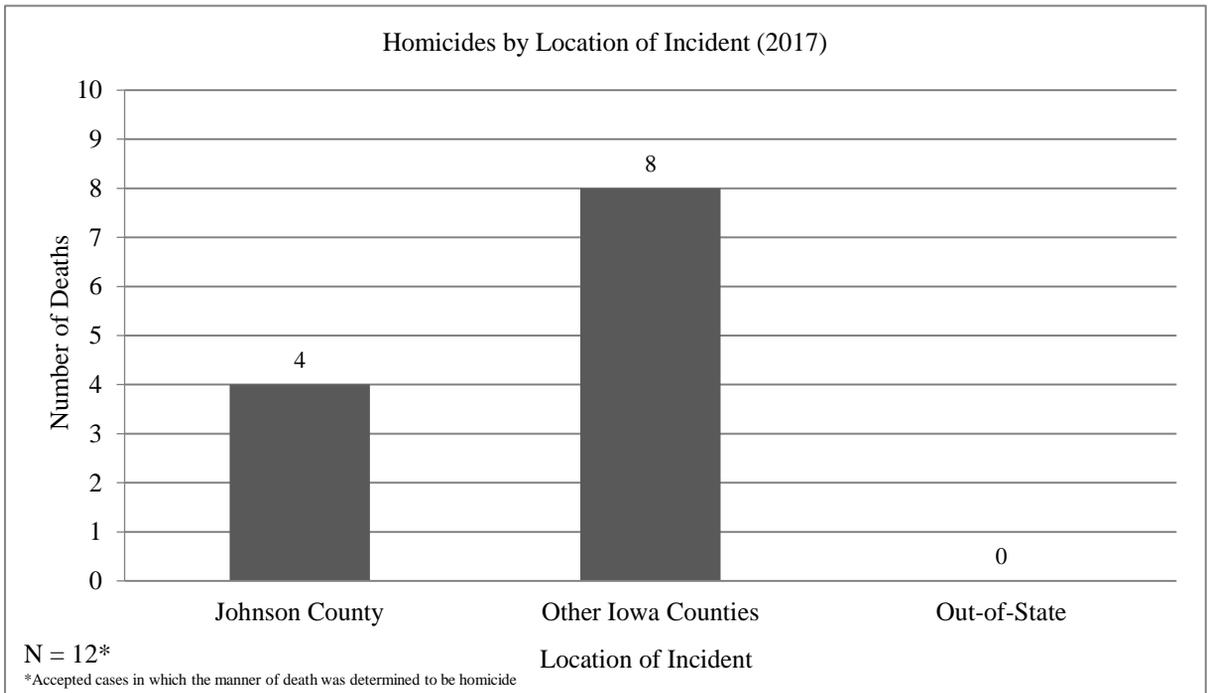


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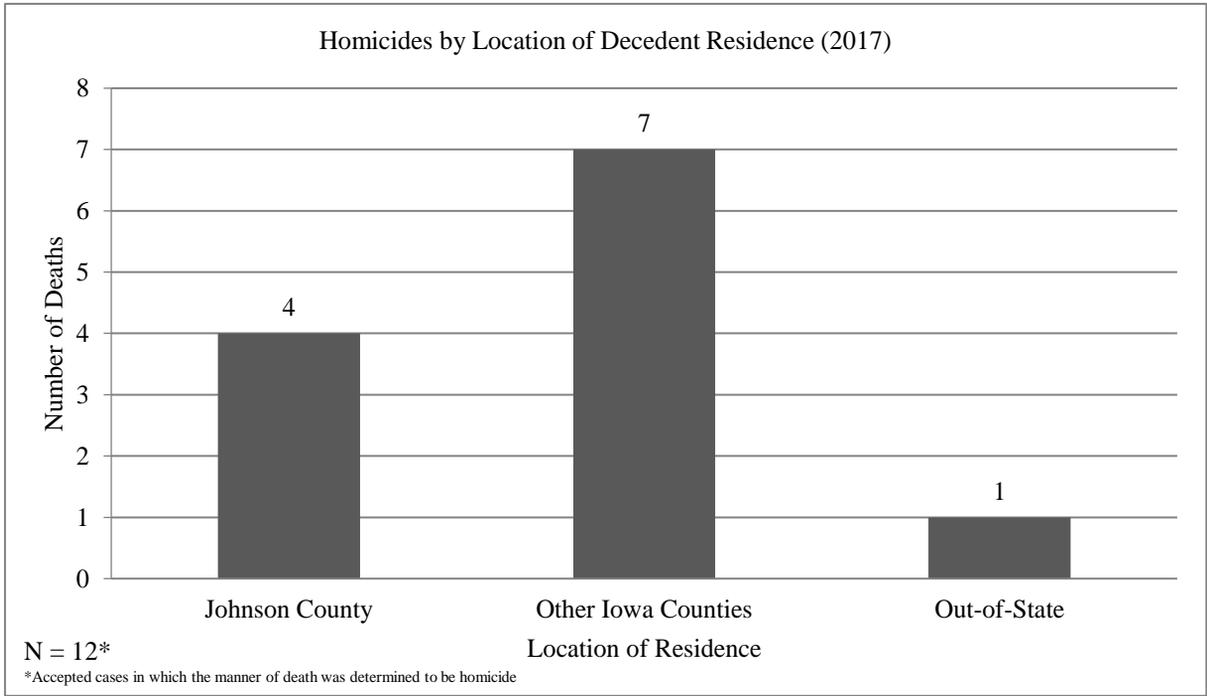


Figure 6.5.

Drug-Related Deaths

In 2017, there were 23 drug-related deaths investigated by JCME; of this total, 8 involved prescription and/or over-the-counter medications, 14 involved illicit drugs and/or prescription drugs, and 1 was unknown due to inadequate toxicology specimens. Of the illicit drug-related deaths, 5 involved heroin, 5 involved methamphetamine, 3 involved fentanyl, 2 involved cocaine, 1 involved acrylfentanyl, 1 involved MDMA. One was determined to have probably involved heroin, but adequate toxicological specimens were unavailable to confirm the specific drug consumed.

Of the 23 drug-related deaths, 18 were classified as accident, 4 as suicide, and 1 was undetermined. Of the 23 drug-related deaths, 13 involved prescription and/or illicit opioids. The sex distribution was 9 males to 4 females, with the most common age range of 50 to 59 years (7 decedents), followed by 60 to 69 years (3 decedents).

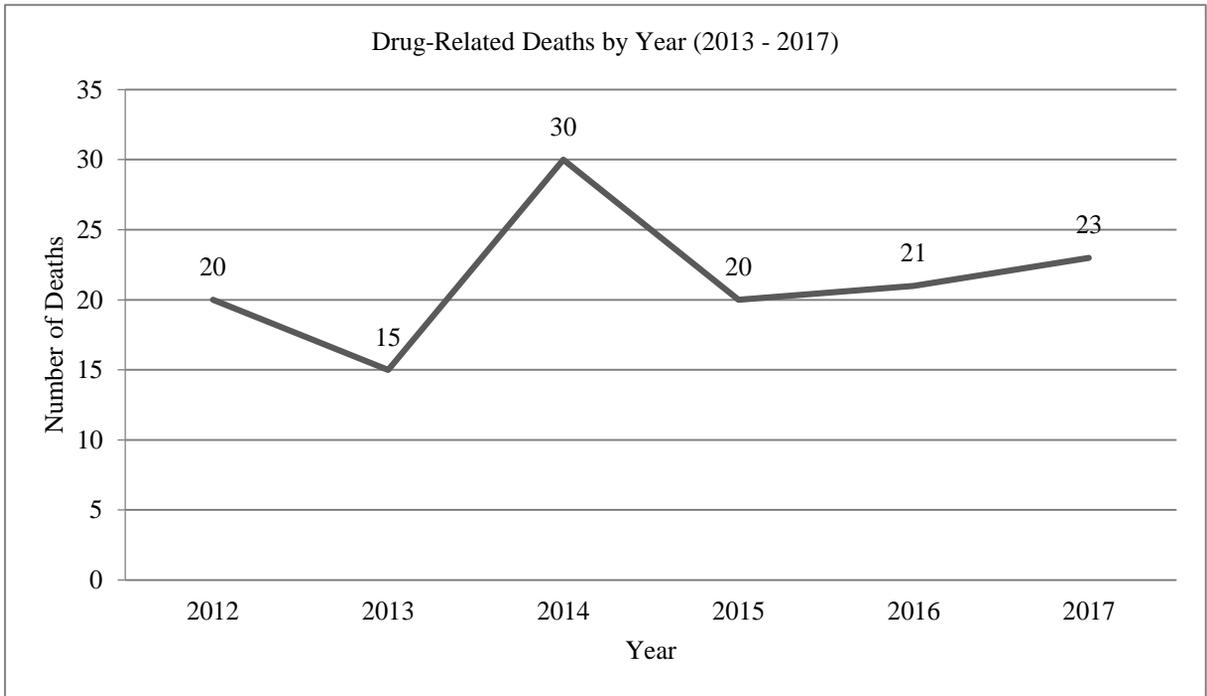


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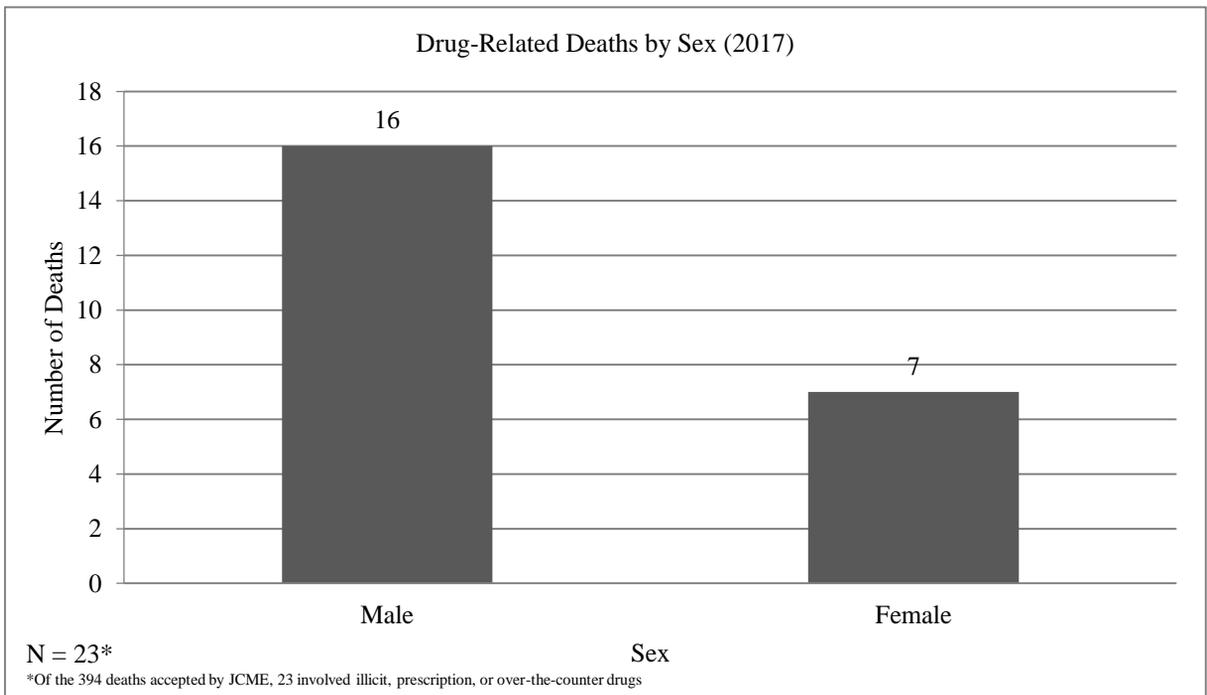


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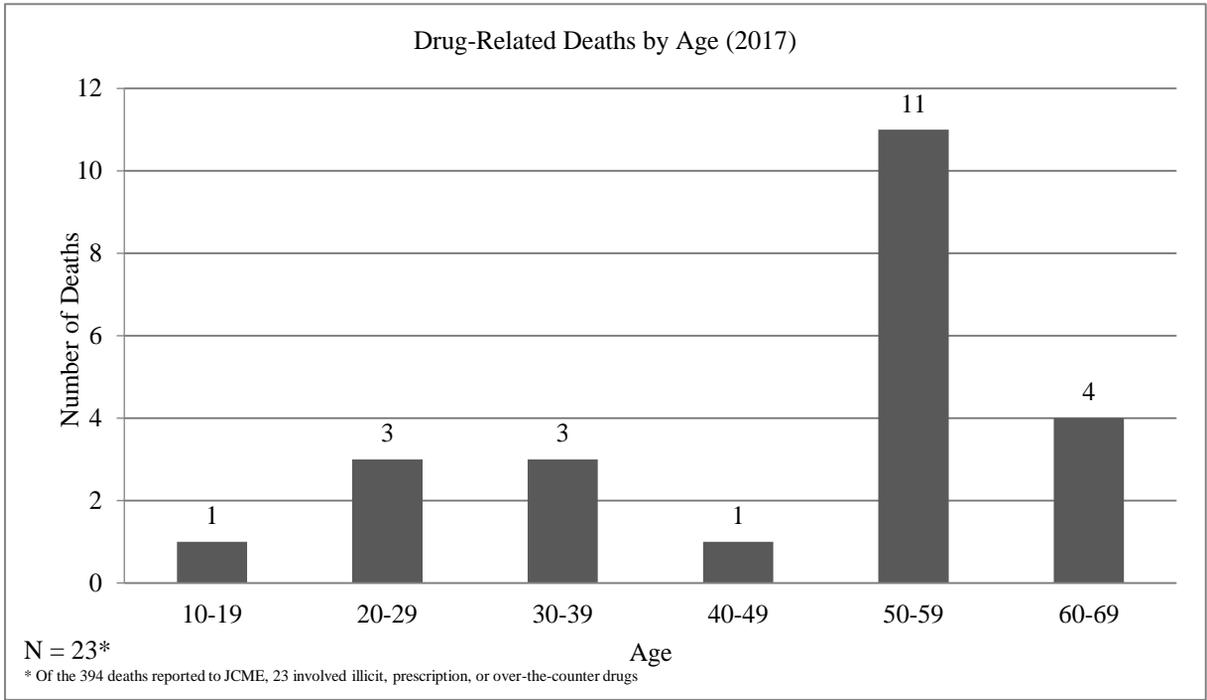


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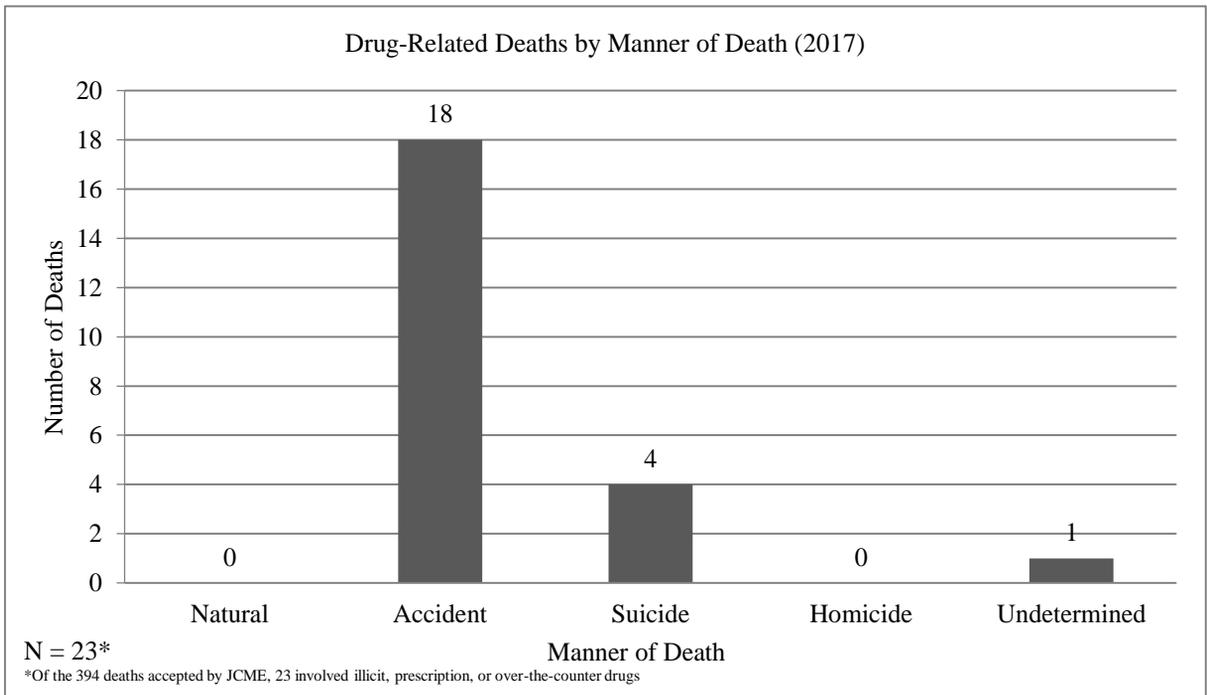


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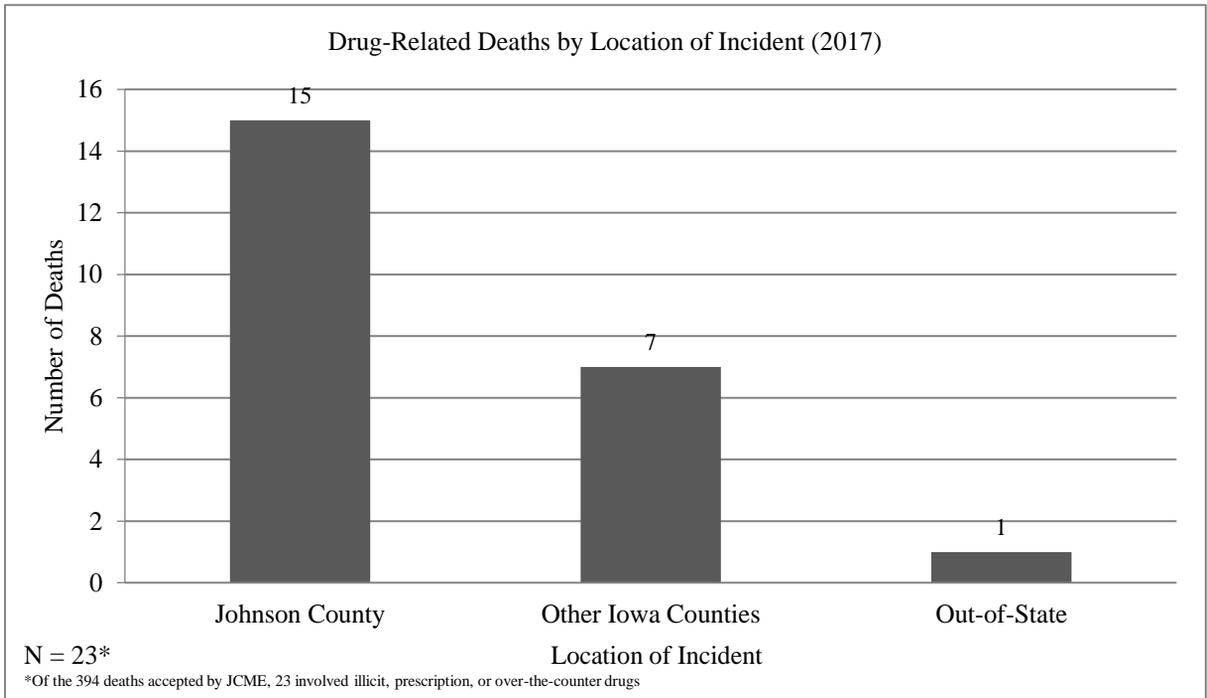


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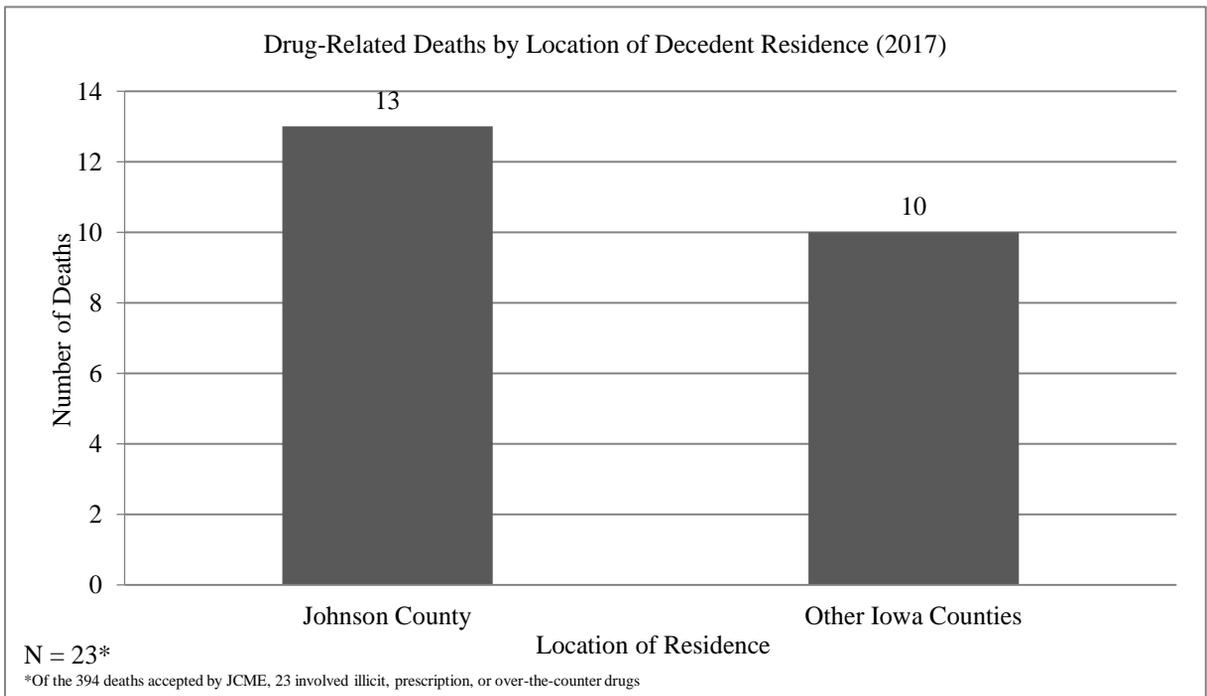


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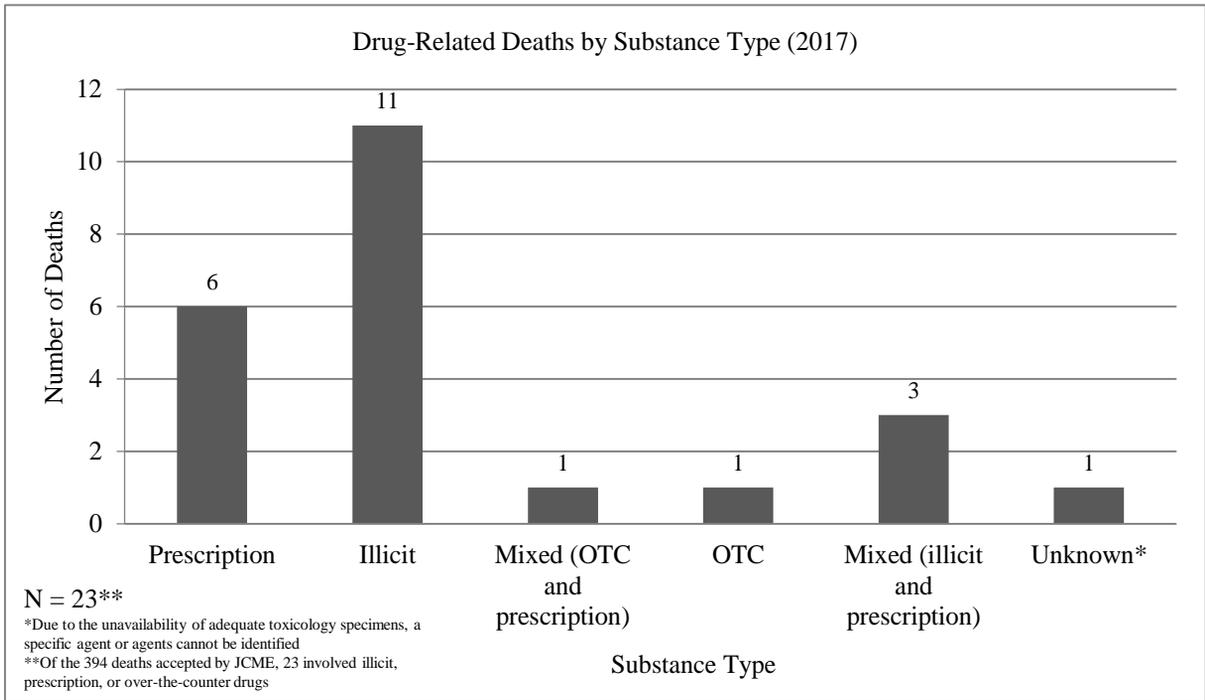


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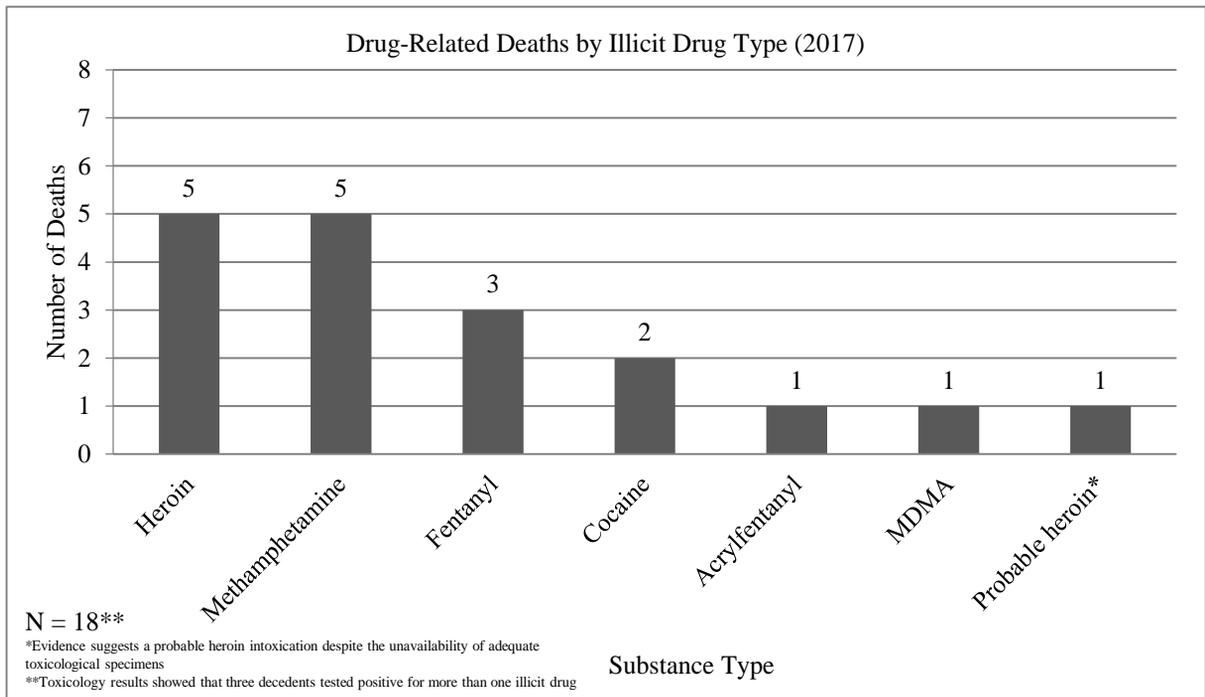


Figure 7.8.

Table 7.1. Drug-Related Deaths by Prescription and Over-the-Counter Drugs (2017)

Type of Drugs	Number of Decedents*
Fentanyl	4
Alprazolam	2
Hydrocodone	2
Hydromorphone	2
Venlafaxine	2
Acetaminophen	1
Bupropion	1
Citalopram	1
Dextromethorphan	1
Diphenhydramine	1
Fluoxetine	1
Gabapentine	1
Lamotrigine	1
Lorazepam	1
Morphine	1
Propranolol	1
Tramadol	1
Zolpidem	1

*Toxicology results showed that several decedents were positive for multiple prescription and over-the-counter drugs at the time of their death

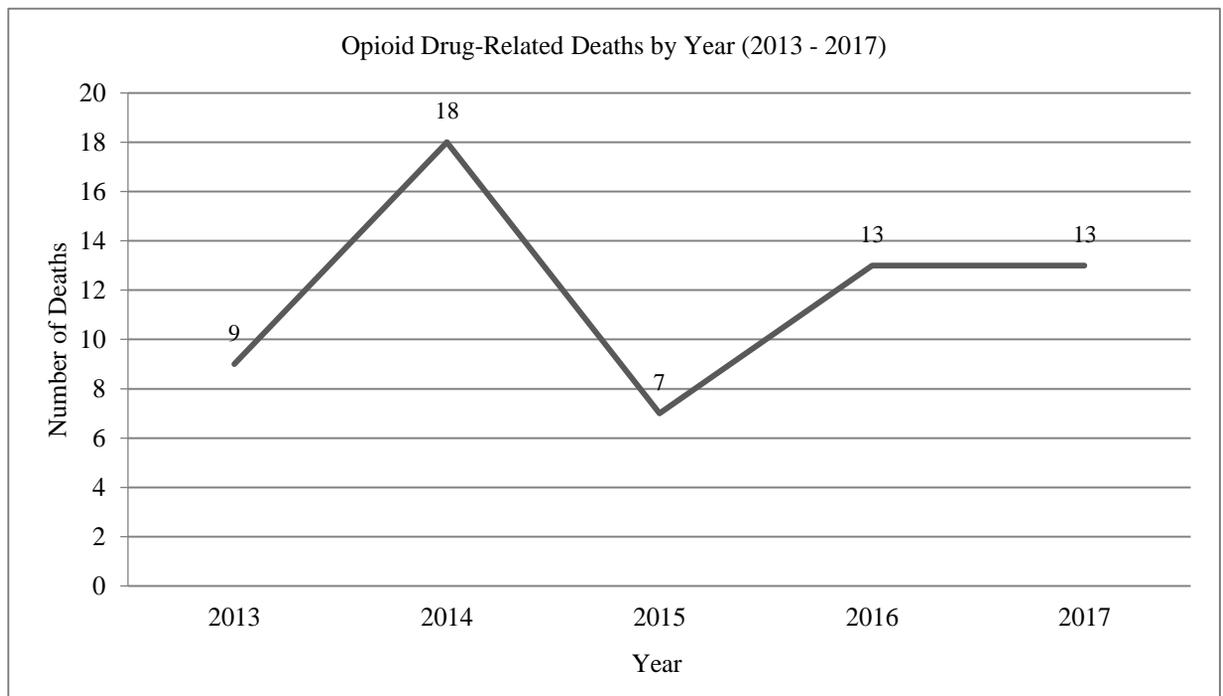


Figure 7.9.

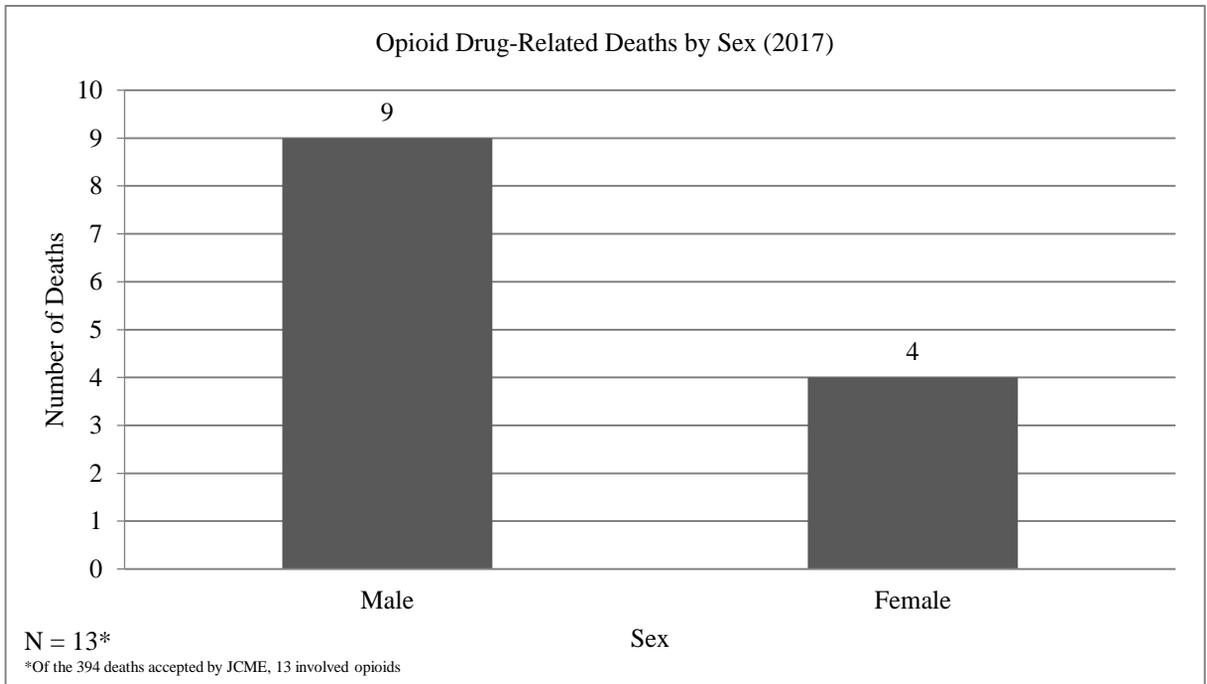


Figure 7.10.

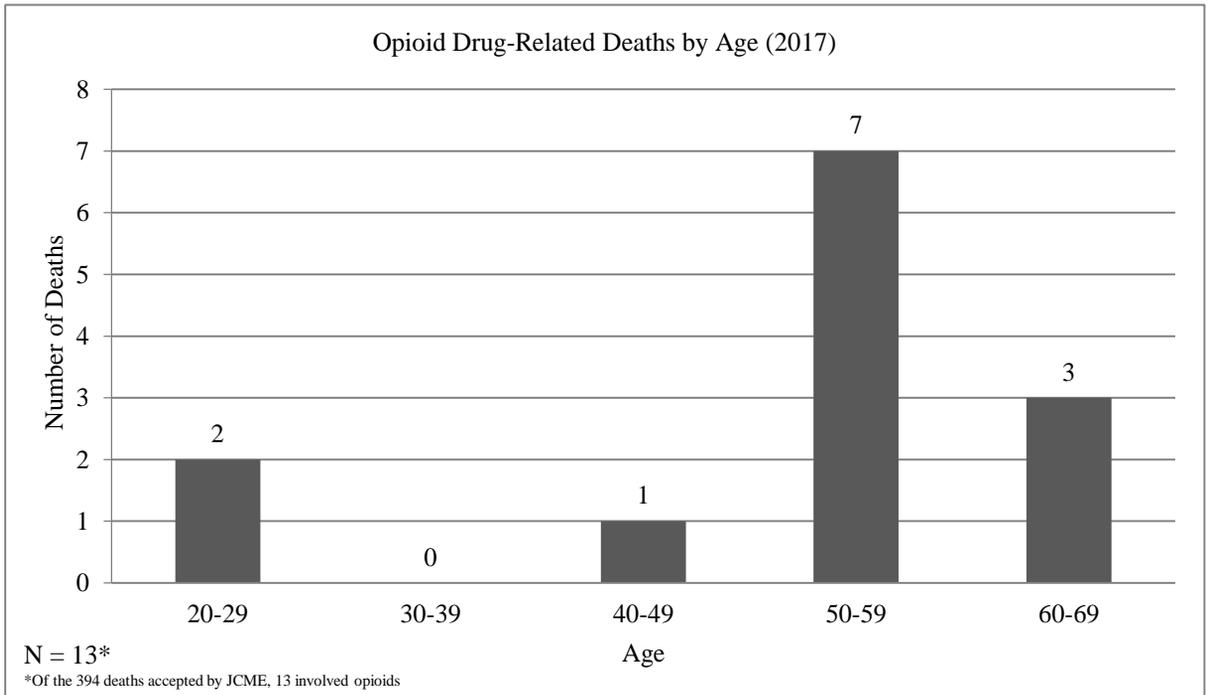


Figure 7.11.

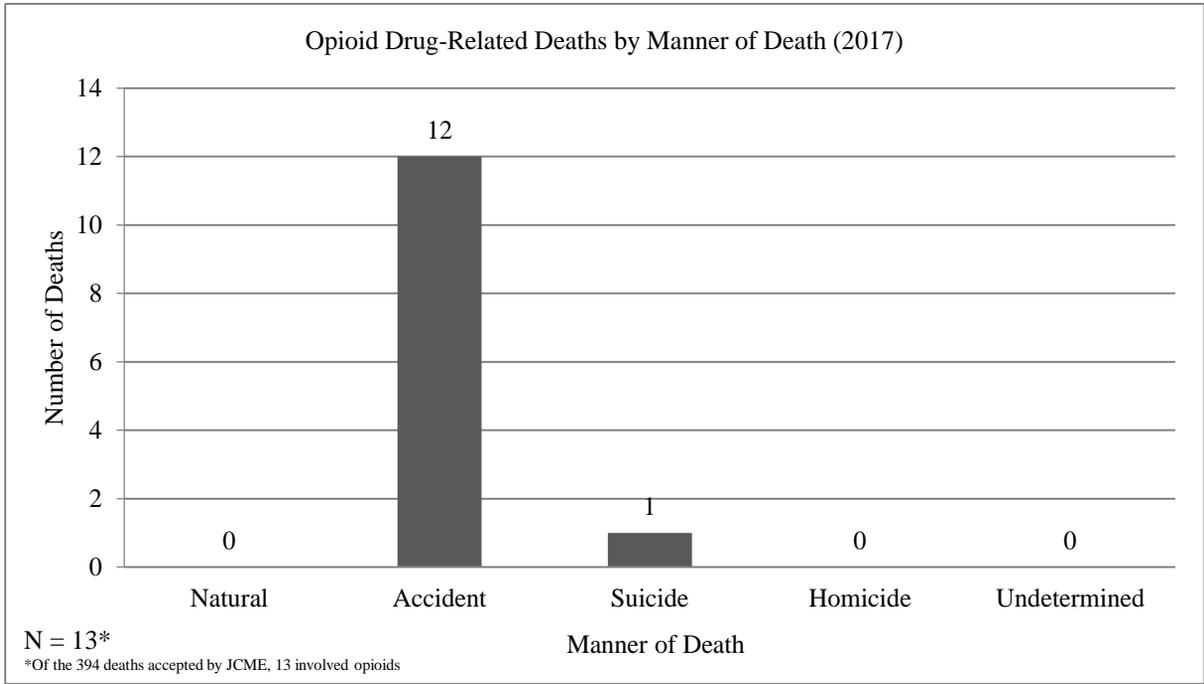


Figure 7.12.

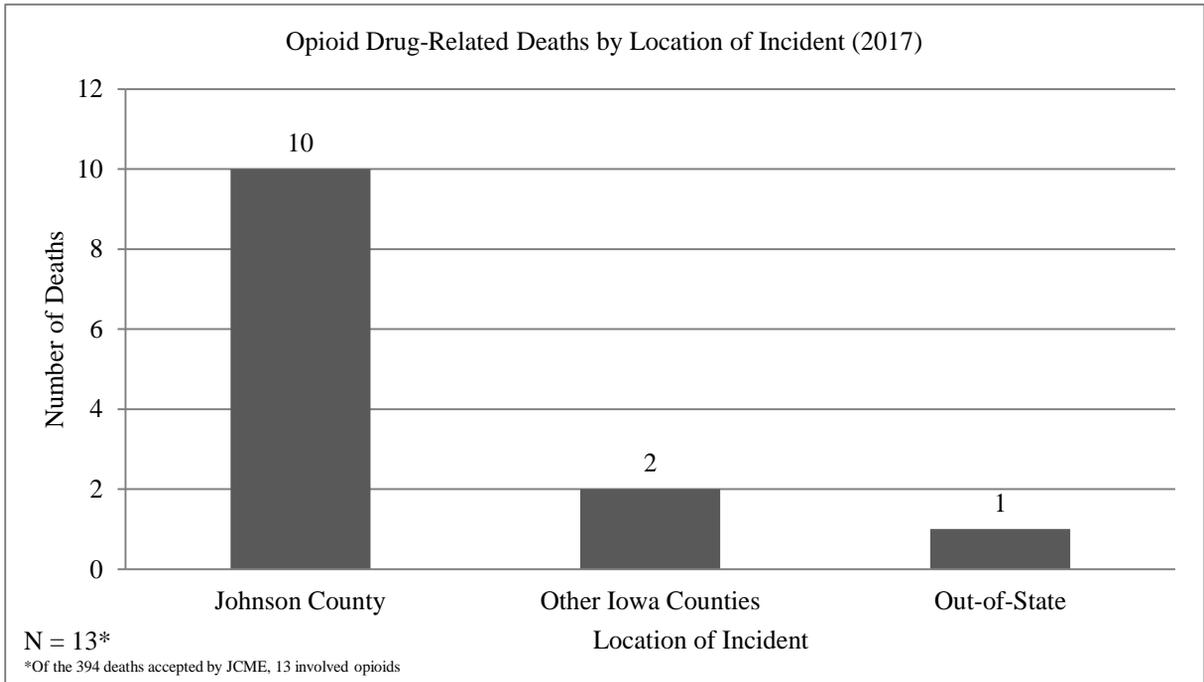


Figure 7.13.

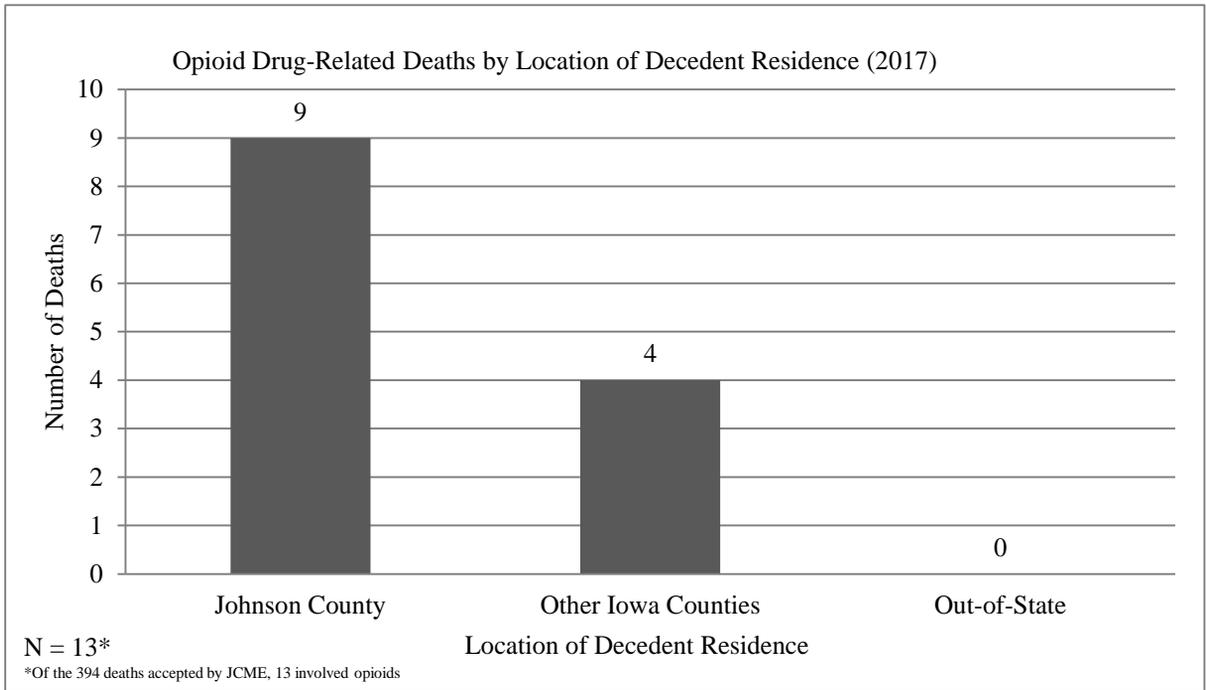


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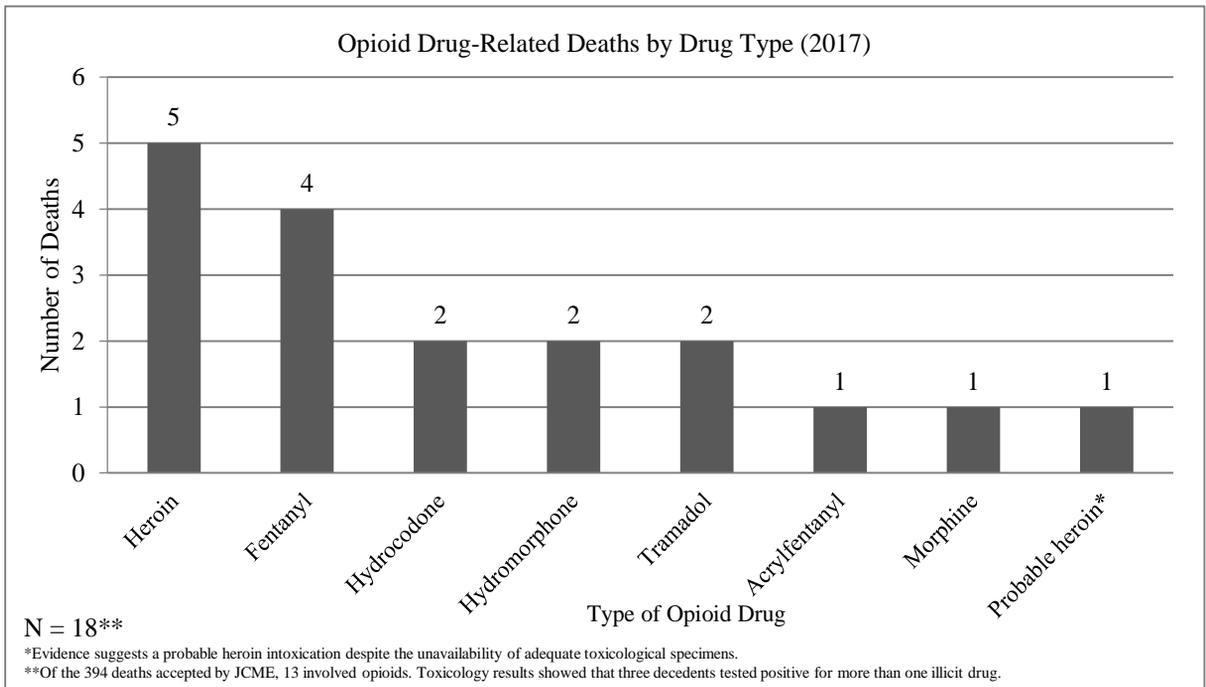


Figure 7.15.

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Older Adult Deaths

In 2017, there were 237 deaths accepted by JCME that involved adults 60 and older. Of these, 98 were residents of Johnson County, 112 were residents of other counties in Iowa, 21 were out-of-state residents, and 6 were Iowa Department of Corrections offenders. 119 of these deaths were certified as accident, 106 as natural, 9 as suicide, 2 as homicide, and 1 as undetermined after a complete autopsy was performed.

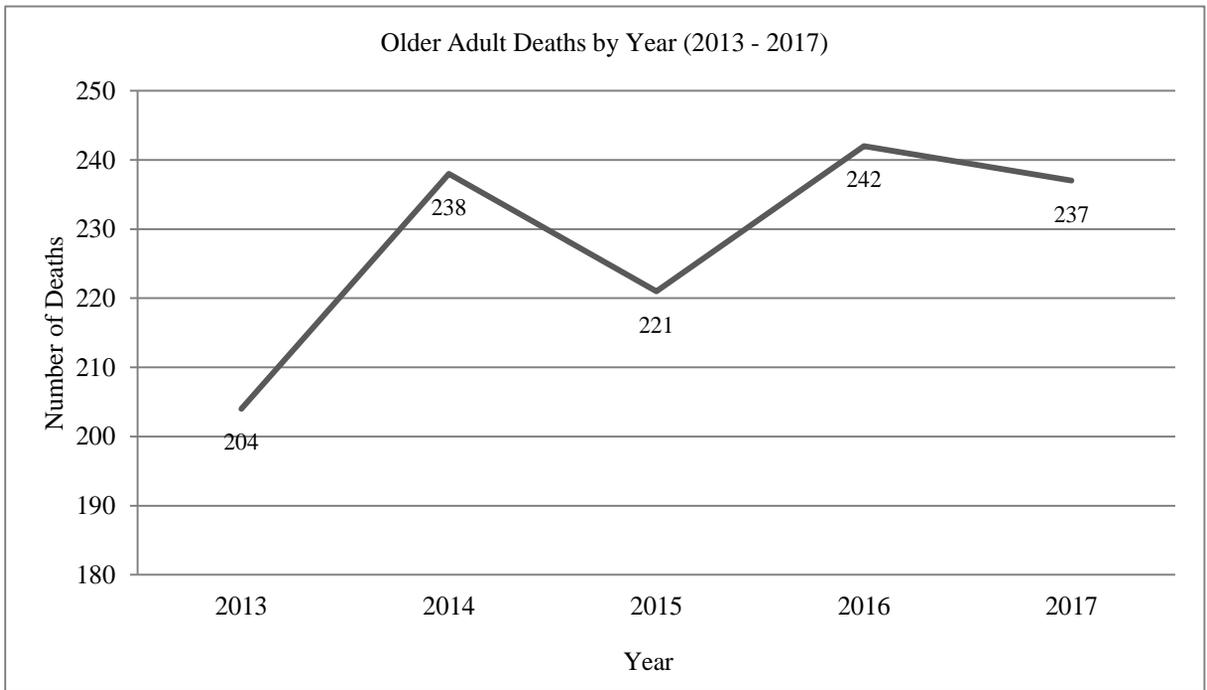


Figure 8.1.

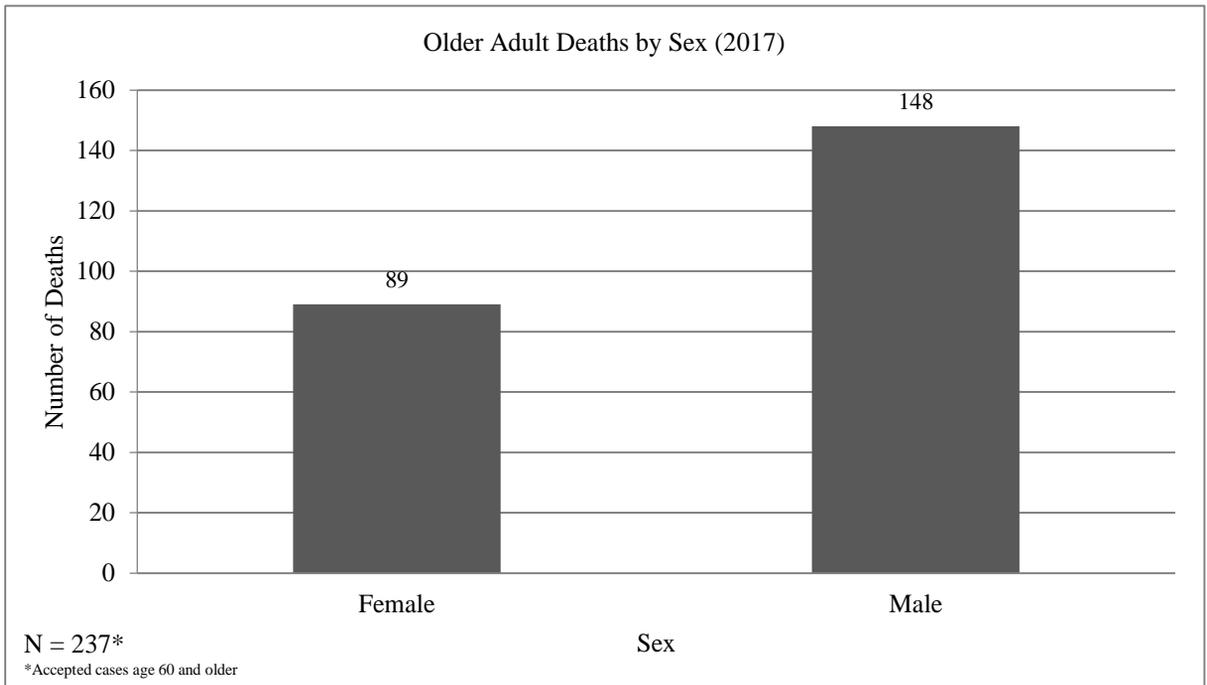


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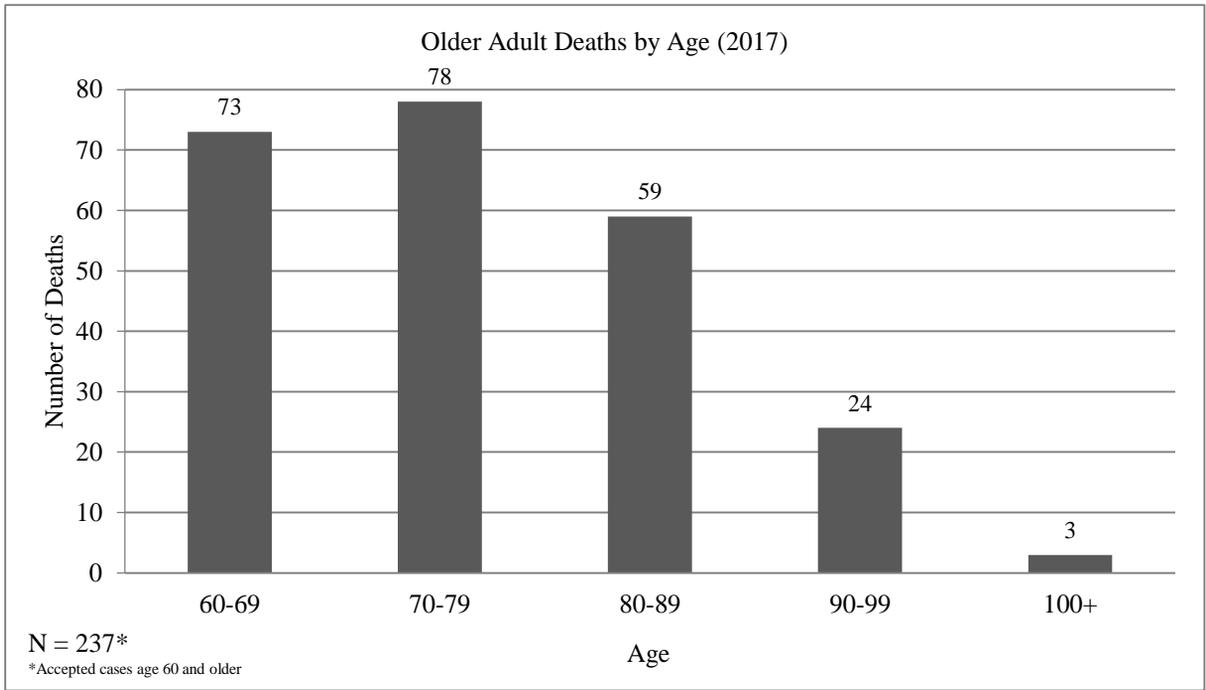


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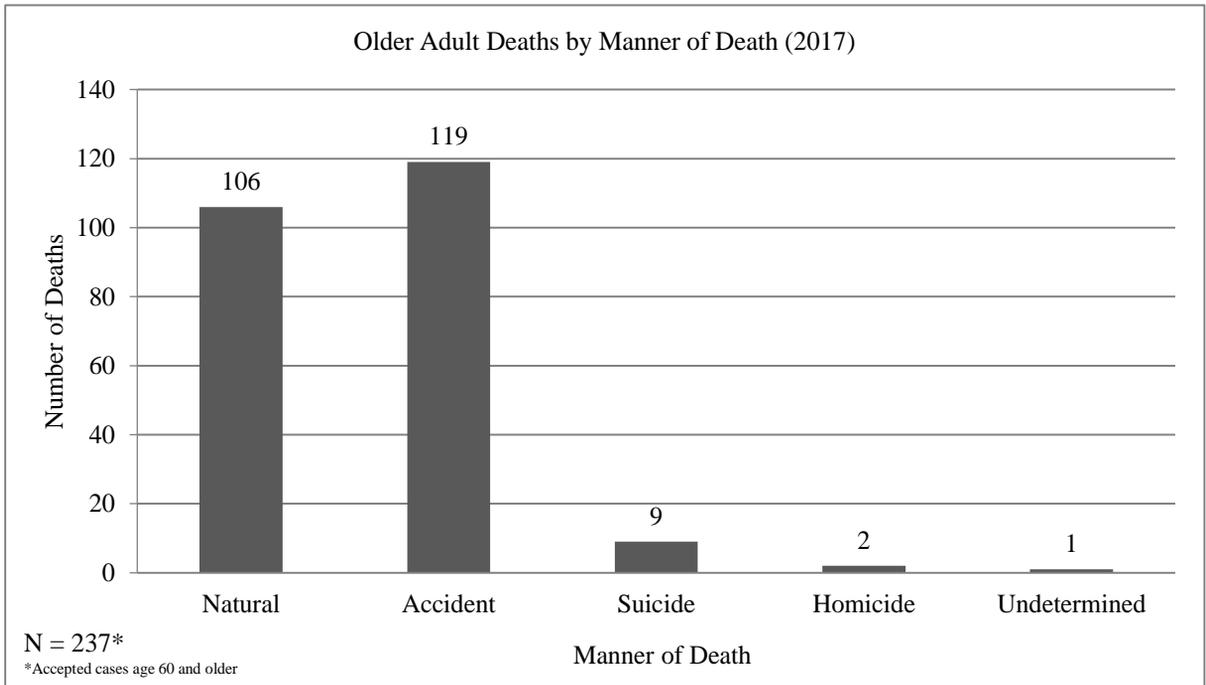


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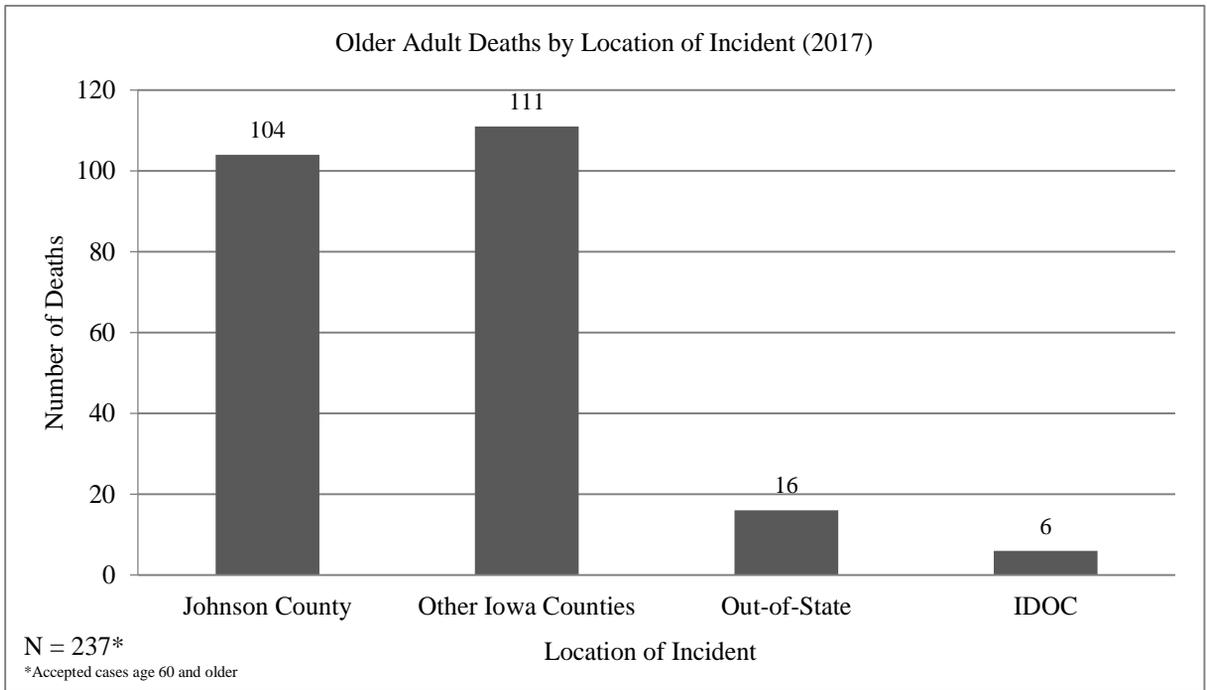


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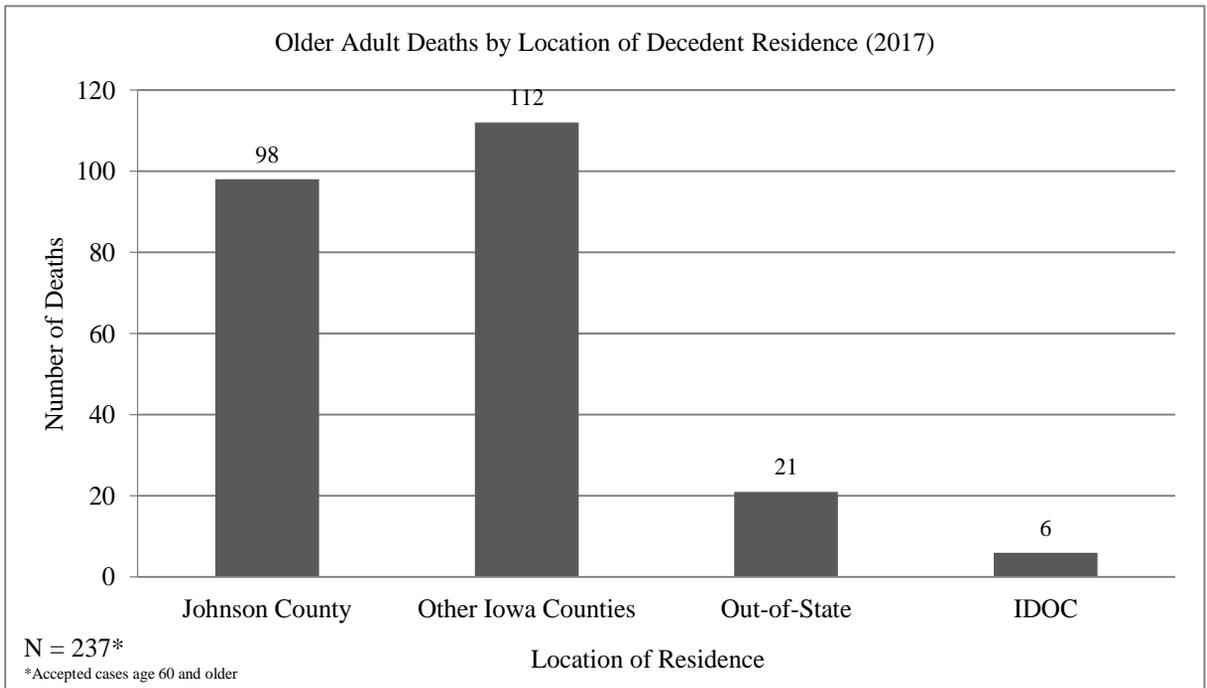


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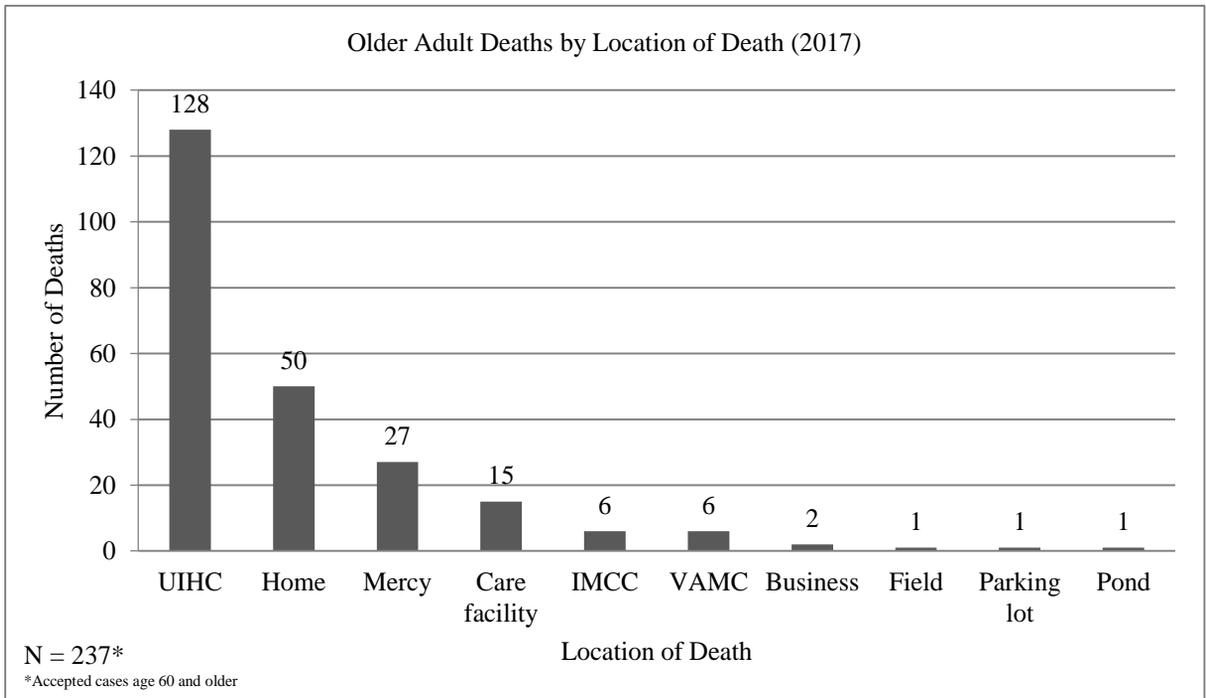


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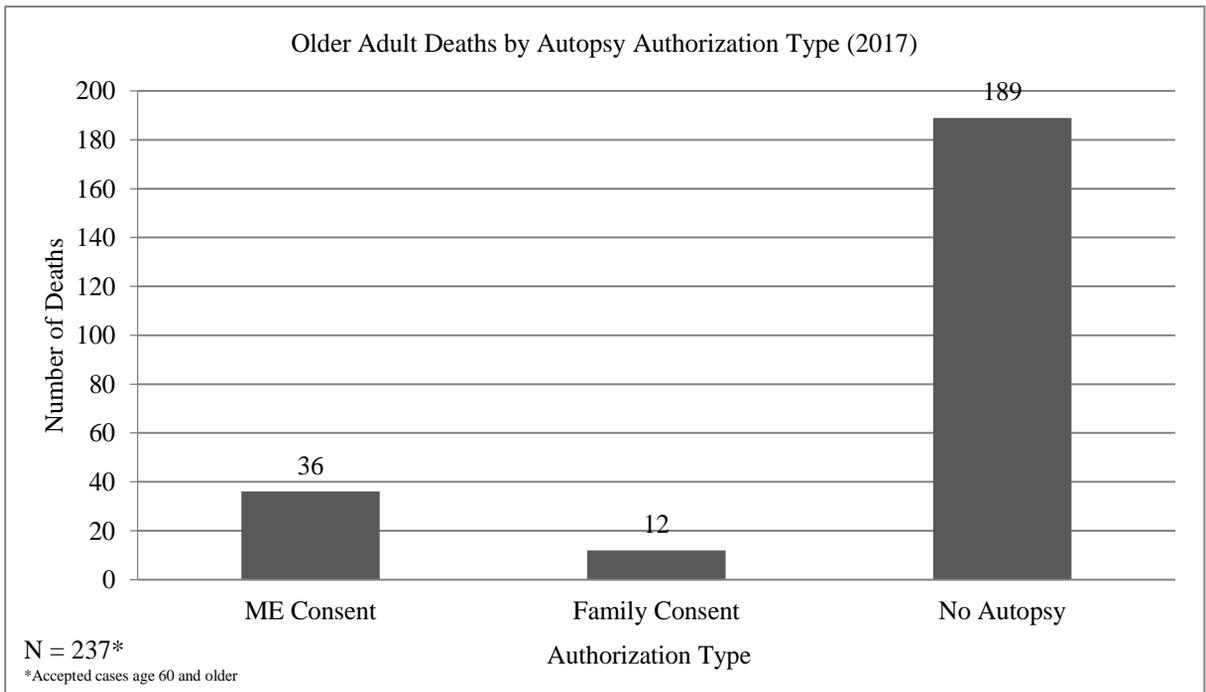


Figure 8.8.

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Older Adult Fall-Related Deaths

There were 237 cases accepted by JCME of adults aged 60 and older. Of these, there were 85 in which the death was the result of a fall. The majority of these, 59, occurred from a standing height, and 43 of the falls occurred inside of the decedent's home. The most common area of injury from a fall was the head and/or neck, which occurred in 43 of the falls.

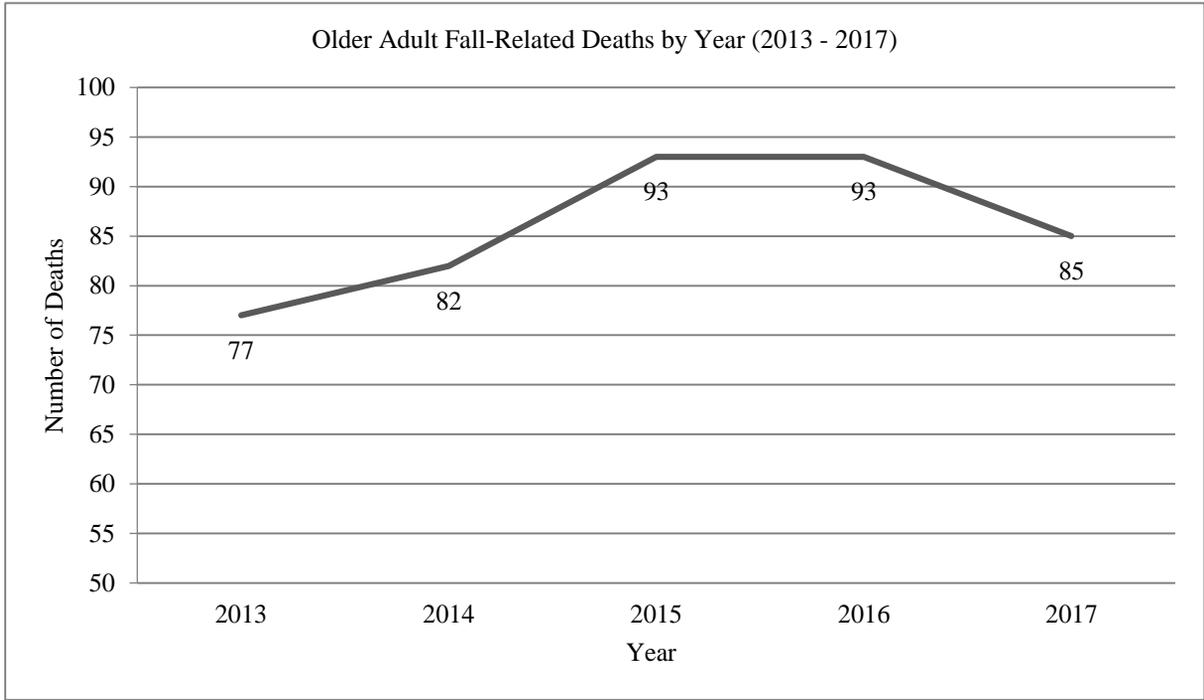


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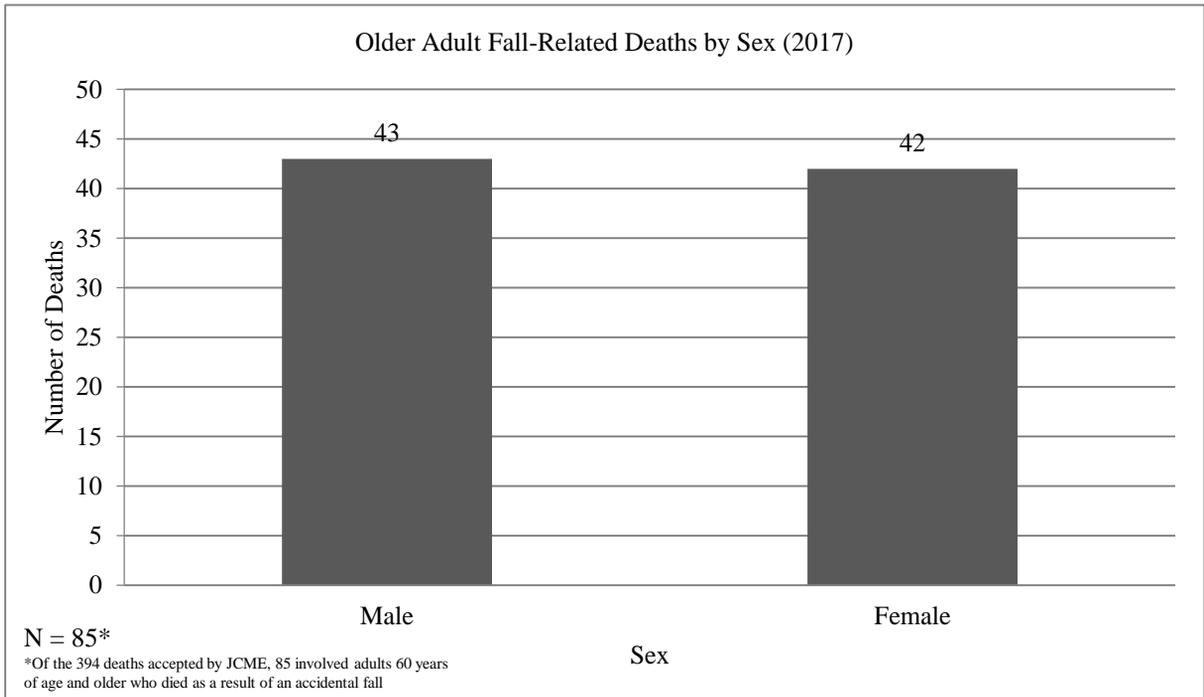


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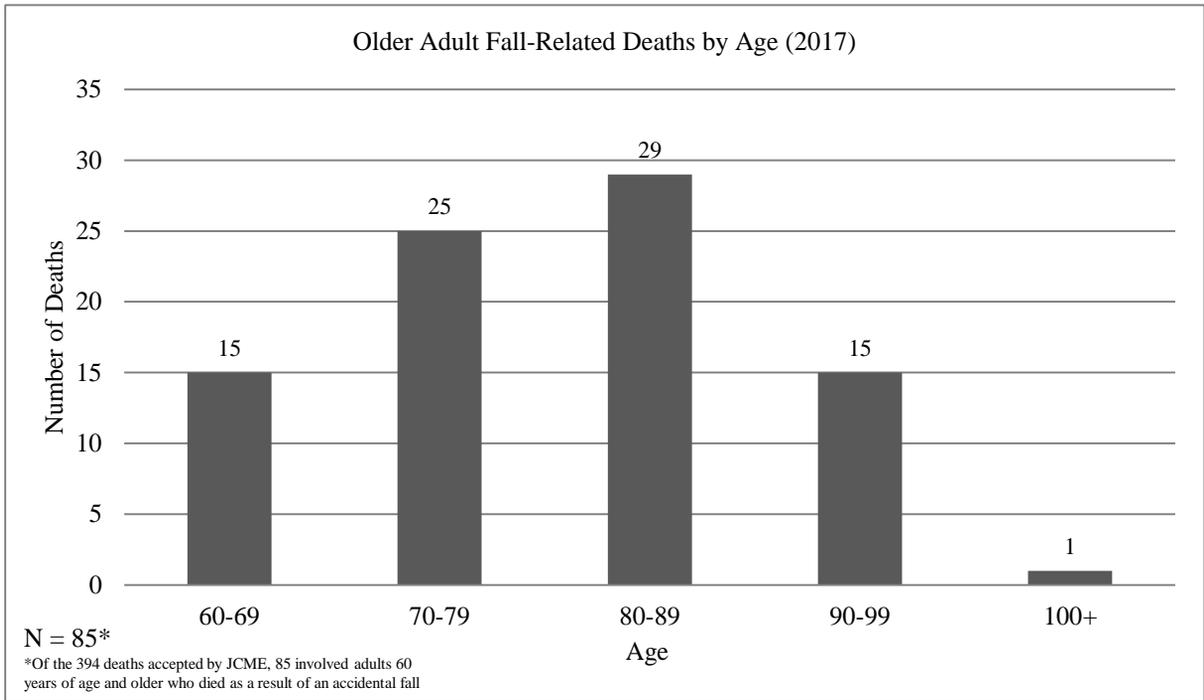


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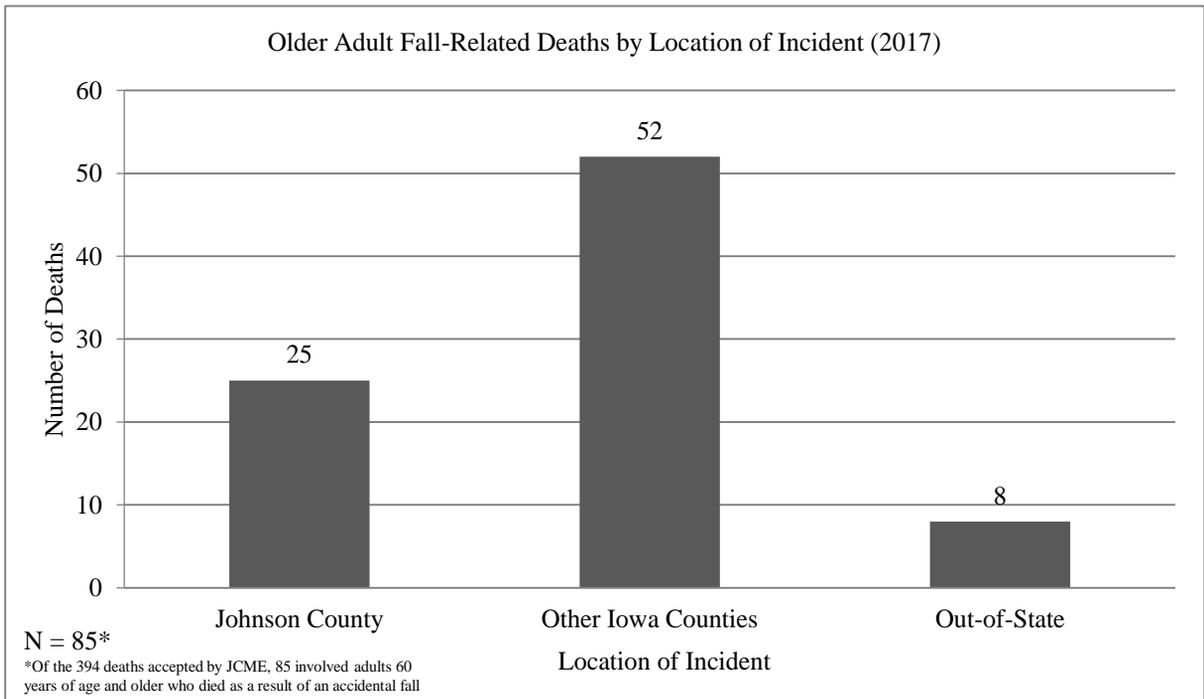


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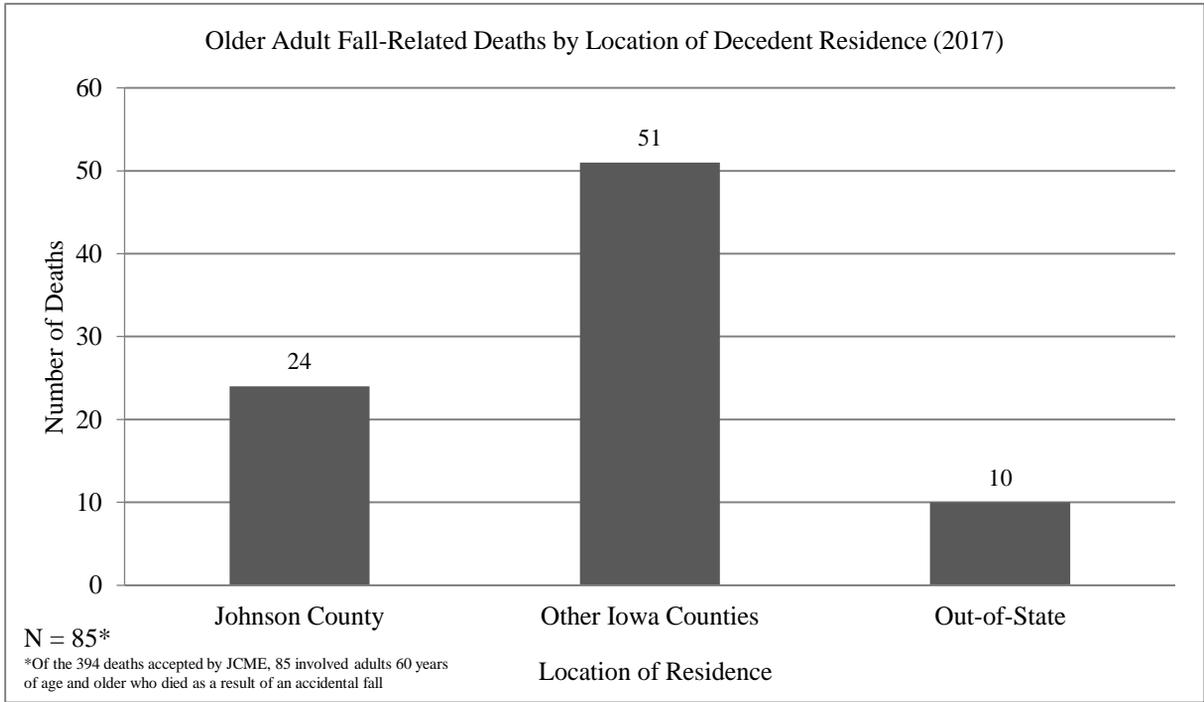


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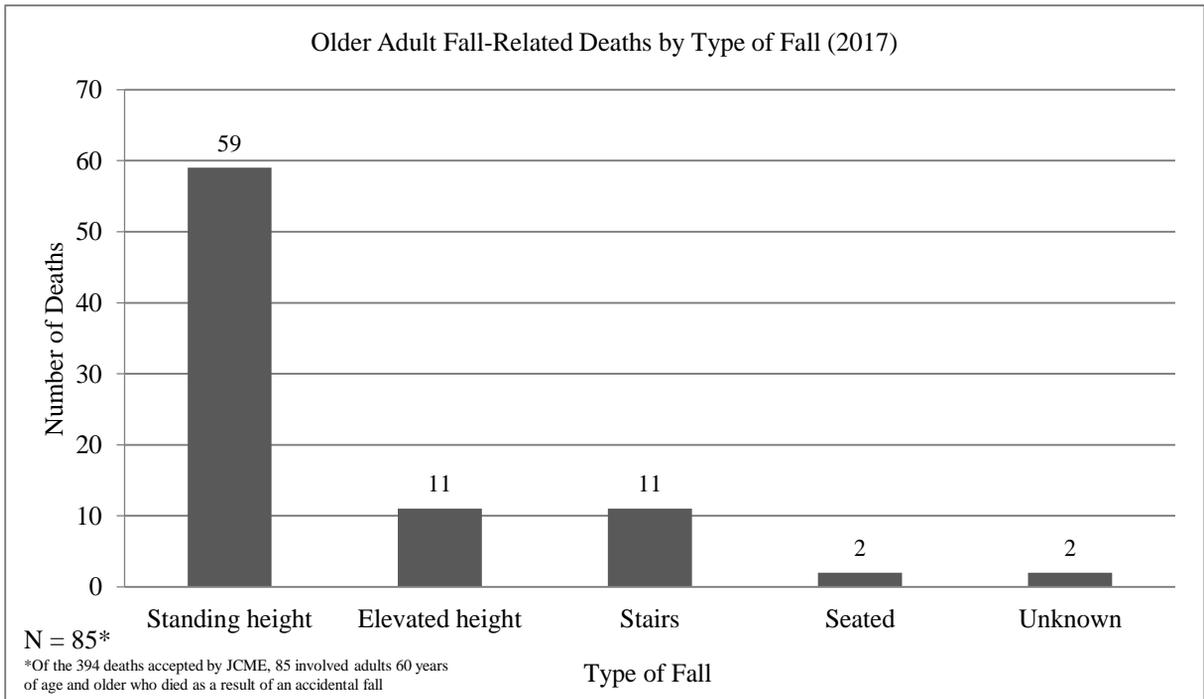


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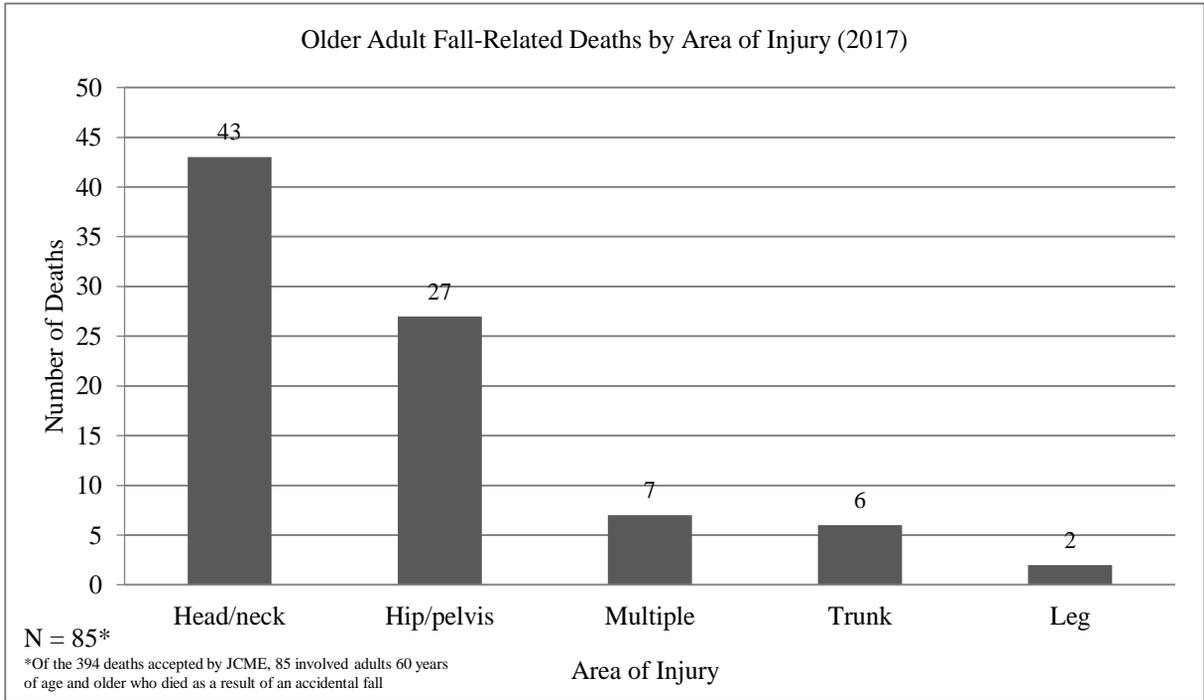


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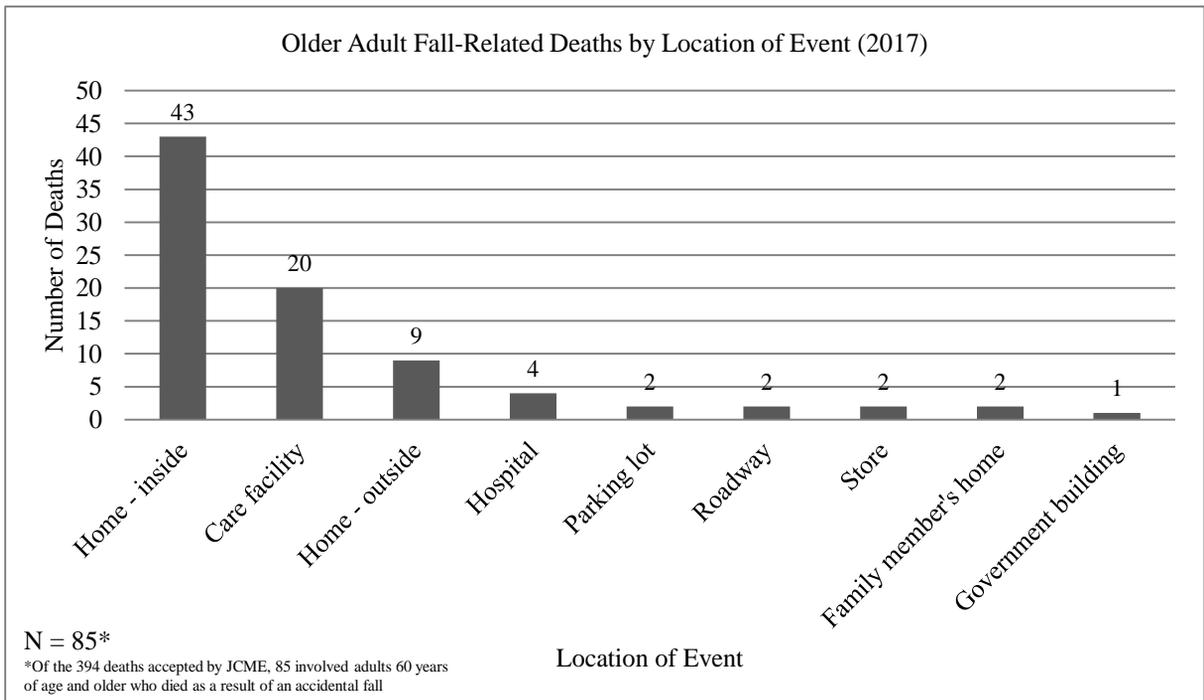


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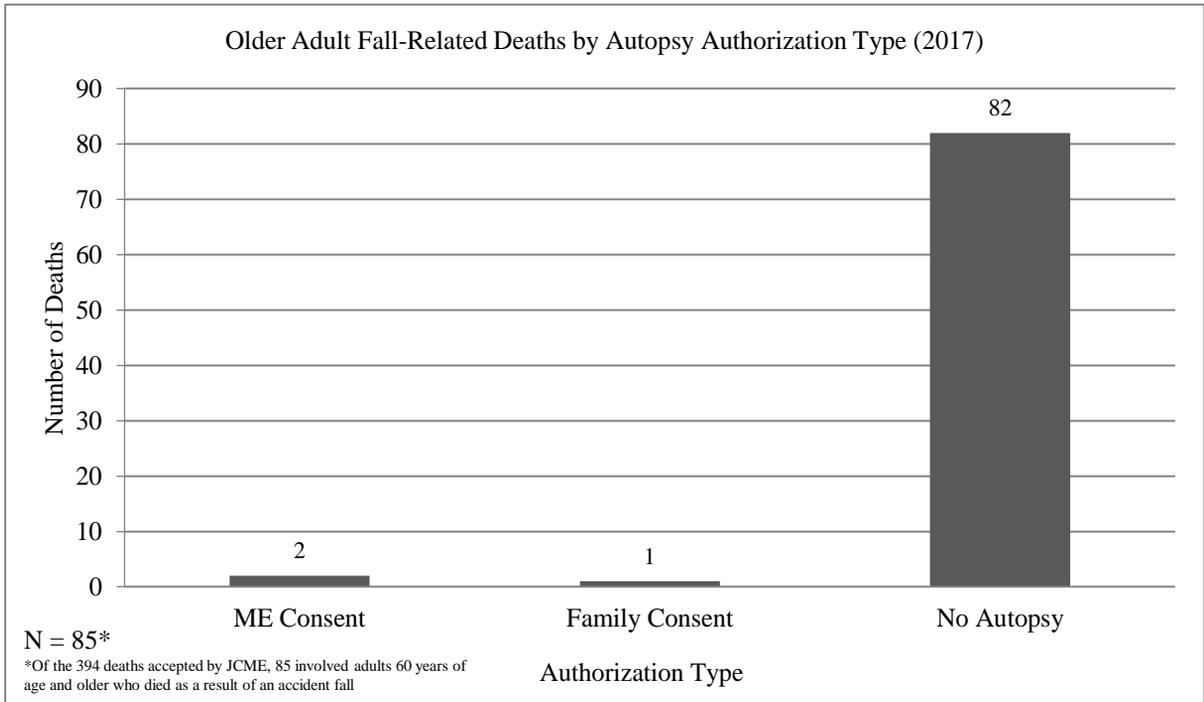


Figure 9.9.

Child Deaths

In 2017, there were 27 deaths of individuals 17 years of age and under. Of these 27 deaths, 12 were classified as accident followed by 7 as natural, 5 as undetermined, 2 as suicide, and 1 as homicide. For 7 of these deaths, the incident location was Johnson County and 20 deaths occurred in other Iowa counties.

There were 6 infant sleep-related deaths in 2017. Of these 6 deaths, 4 were classified as undetermined and 2 as accident. For 4 of these deaths the incident location was Johnson County and the other 2 incident locations were in other Iowa counties.

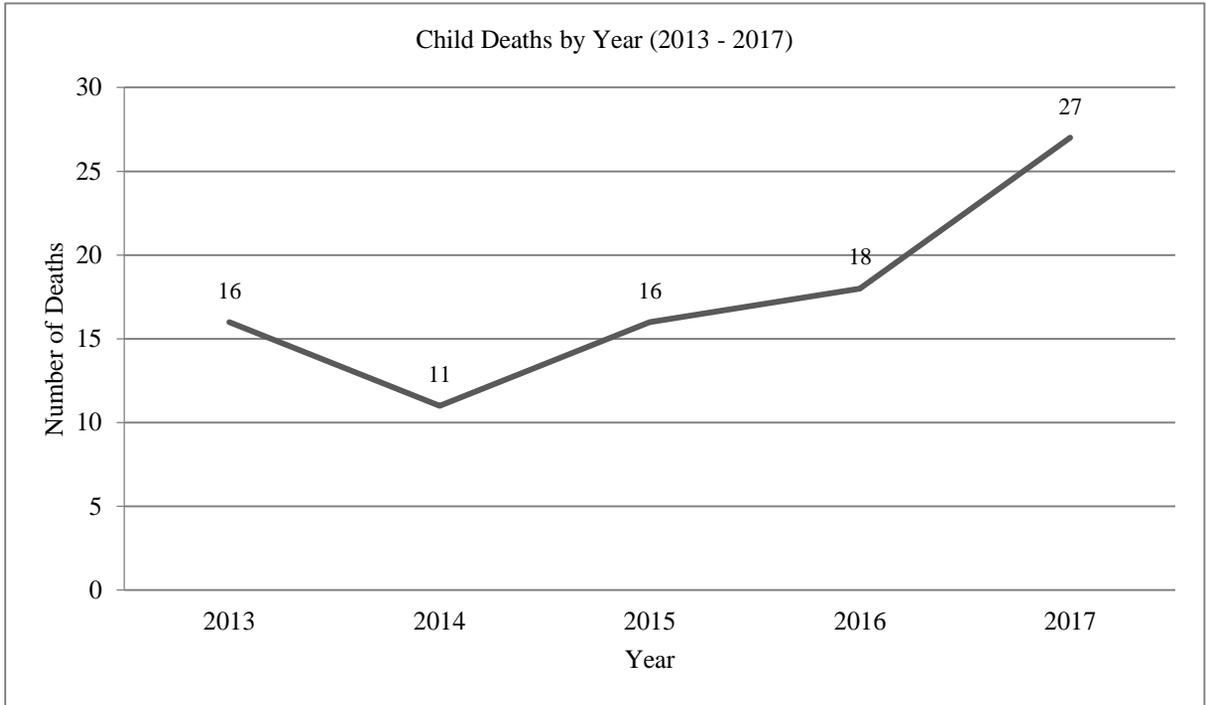


Figure 10.1.

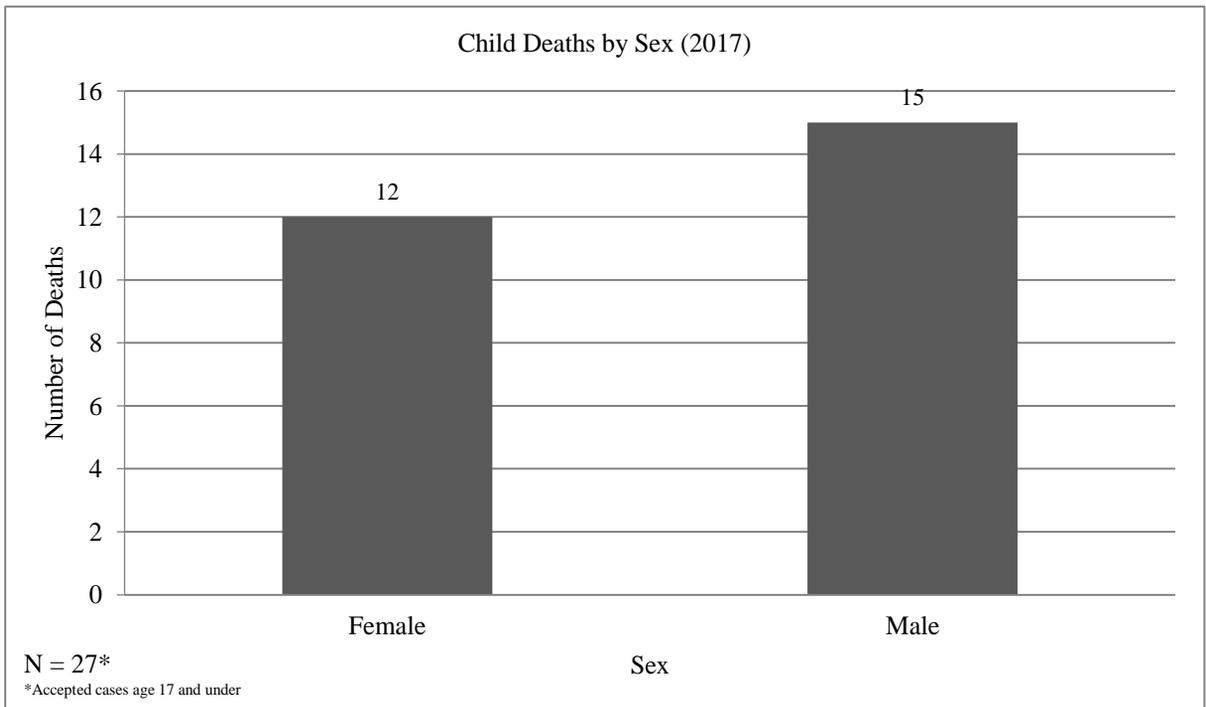


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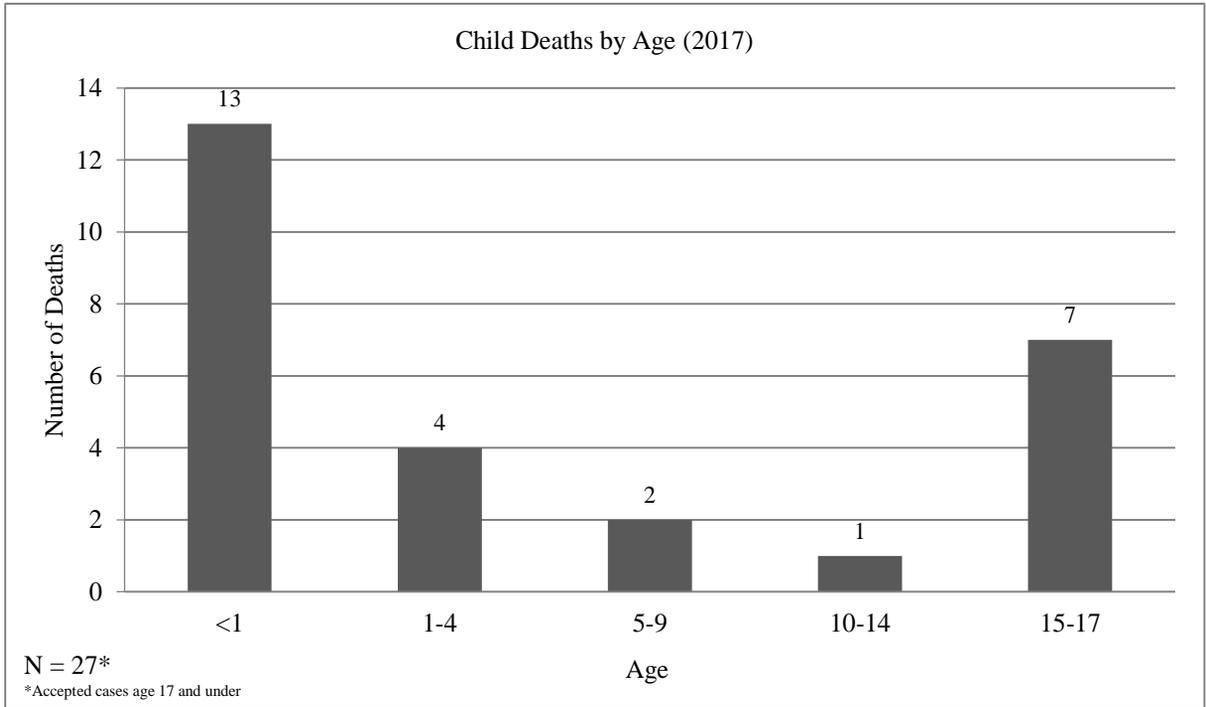


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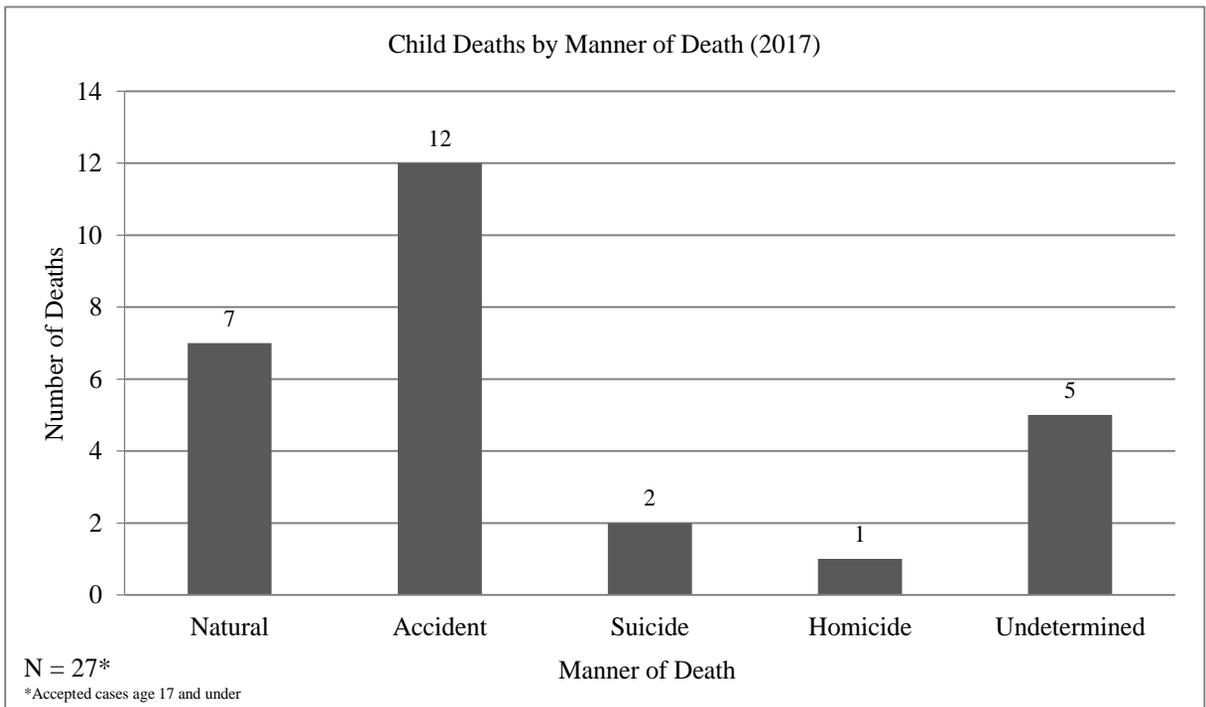


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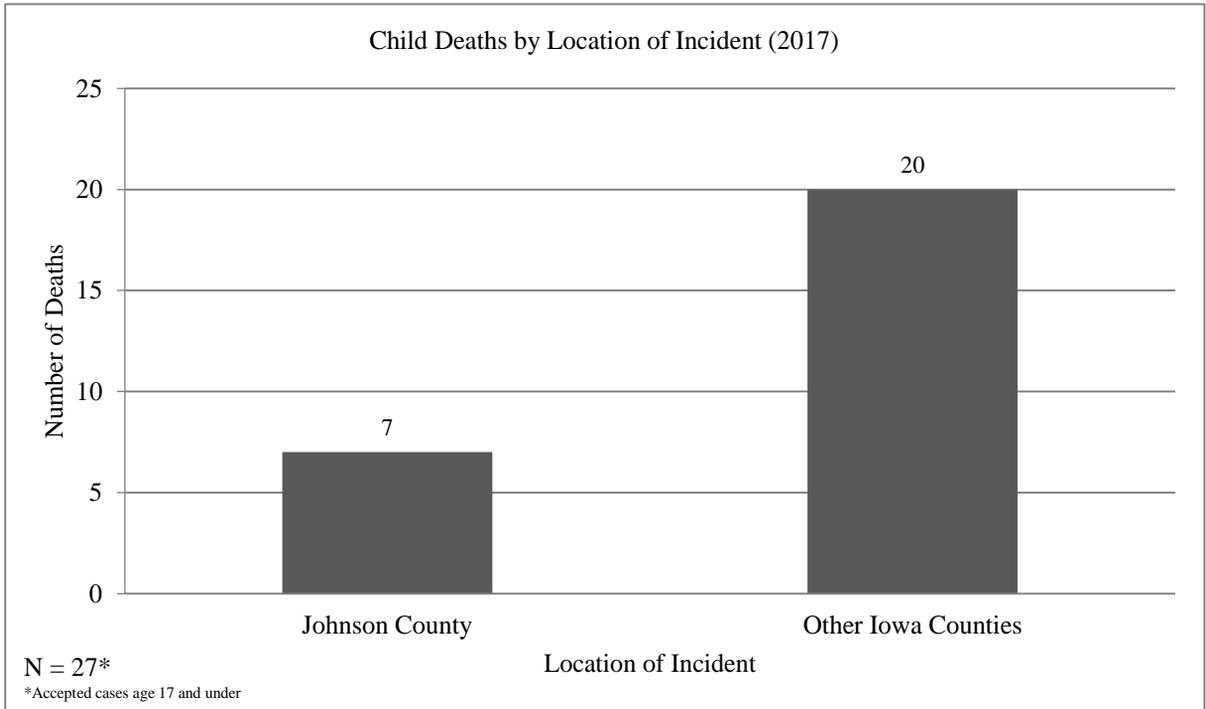


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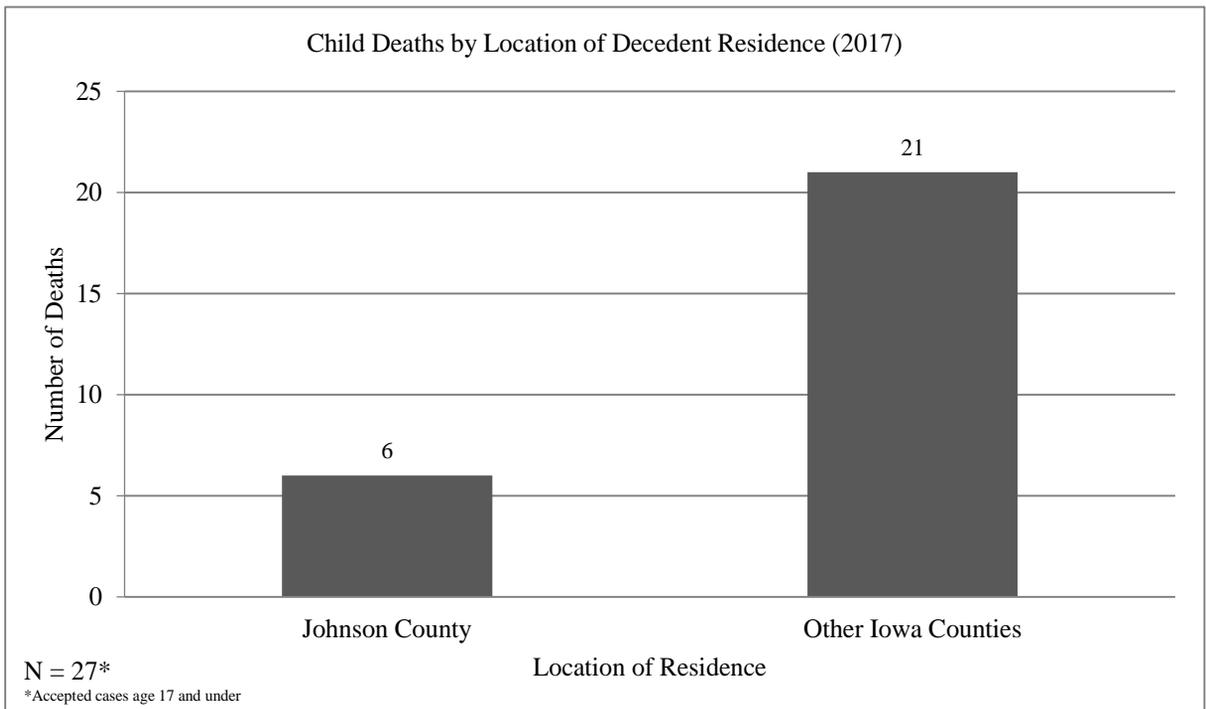


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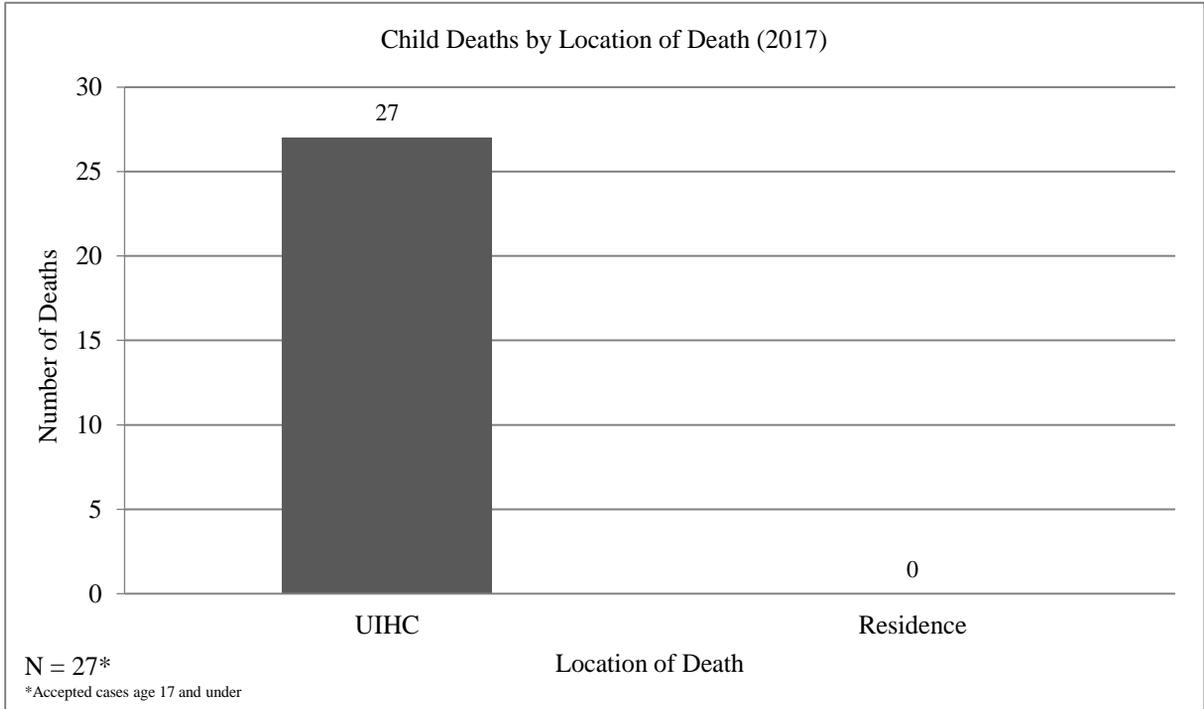


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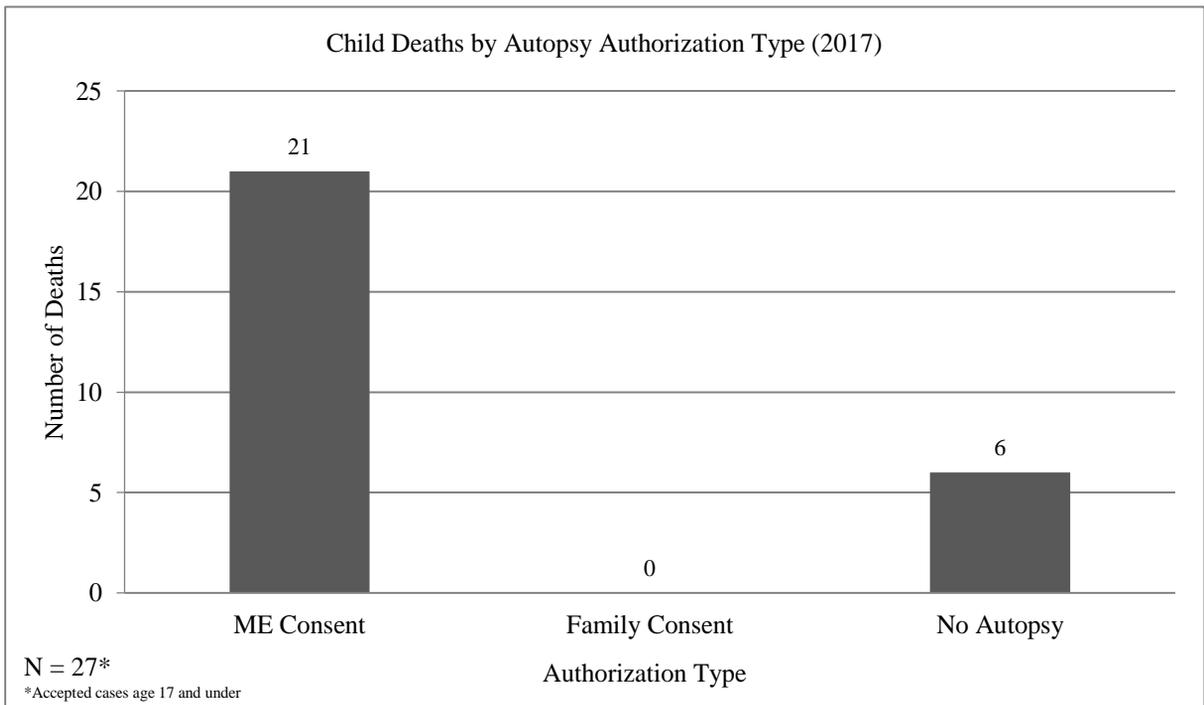


Figure 10.8.

Table 10.1. Infant Sleep-Related Deaths (2017)*

Age	Sex	Cause of Death	Manner of Death	Location of Incident
3 months, 17 days	F	Asphyxia due to external airway obstruction and probable mechanical compression	Accident	Other Iowa County
3 months, 25 days	M	Undetermined	Undetermined	Johnson County
3 months, 28 days	F	Probable asphyxia	Accident	Johnson County
4 months, 12 days	M	Undetermined	Undetermined	Other Iowa County
5 months, 6 days	M	Hypoxic-ischemic encephalopathy due to resuscitated cardiopulmonary arrest of unknown etiology	Undetermined	Johnson County
7 months, 12 days	M	Undetermined	Undetermined	Johnson County

*Infant deaths in which an unsafe sleep environment/sleep surface may have had a contributory role

Budget

Johnson County's fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30. In fiscal year 2017, JCME was 11% under our budgeted expenditures and 1% over our budgeted revenues.

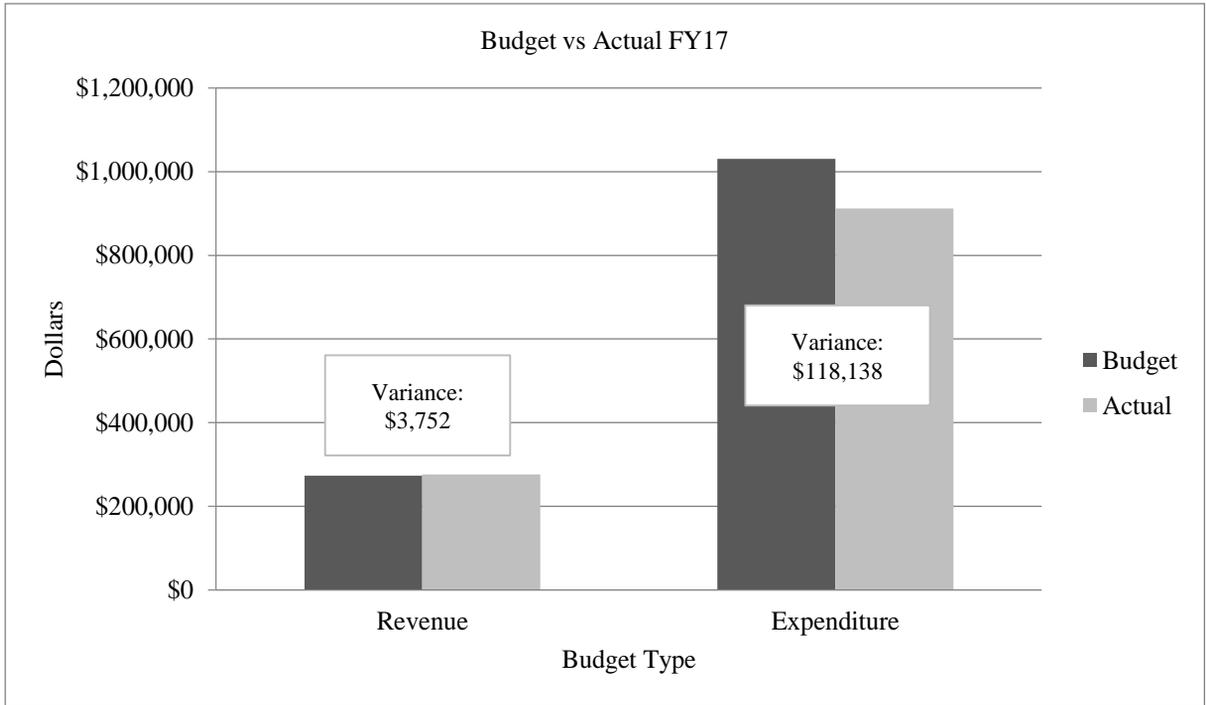
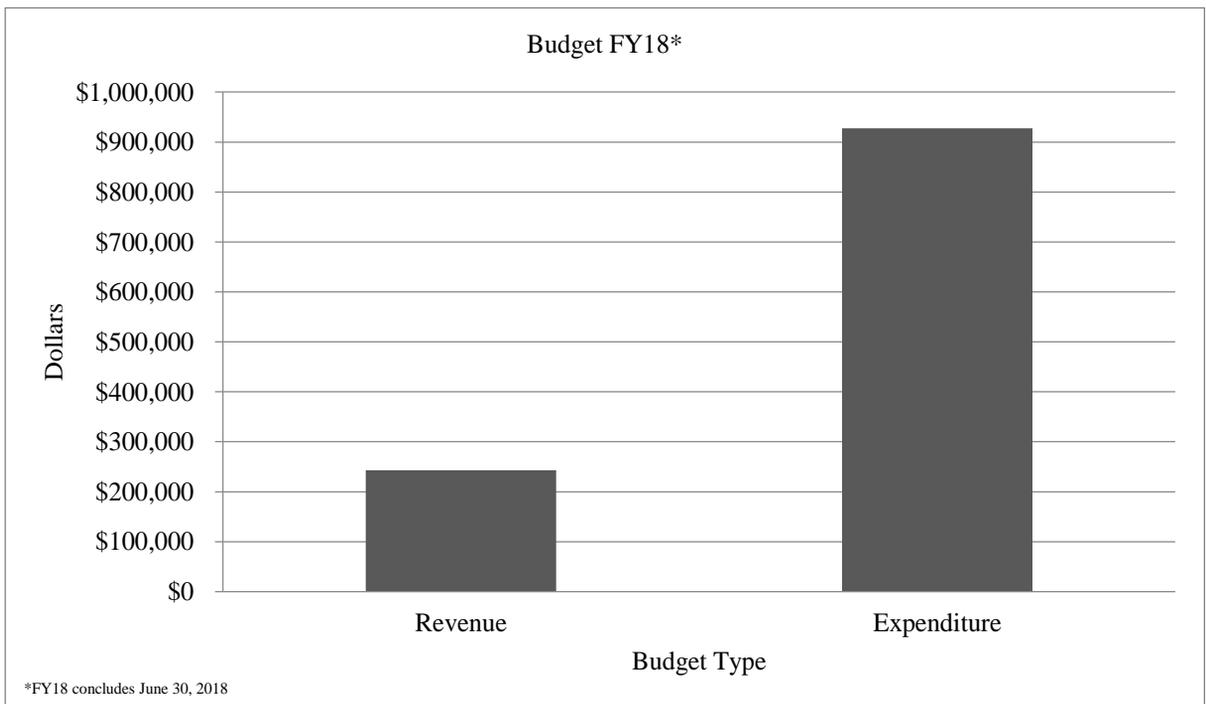


Figure 11.1.



*FY18 concludes June 30, 2018

Figure 11.2.

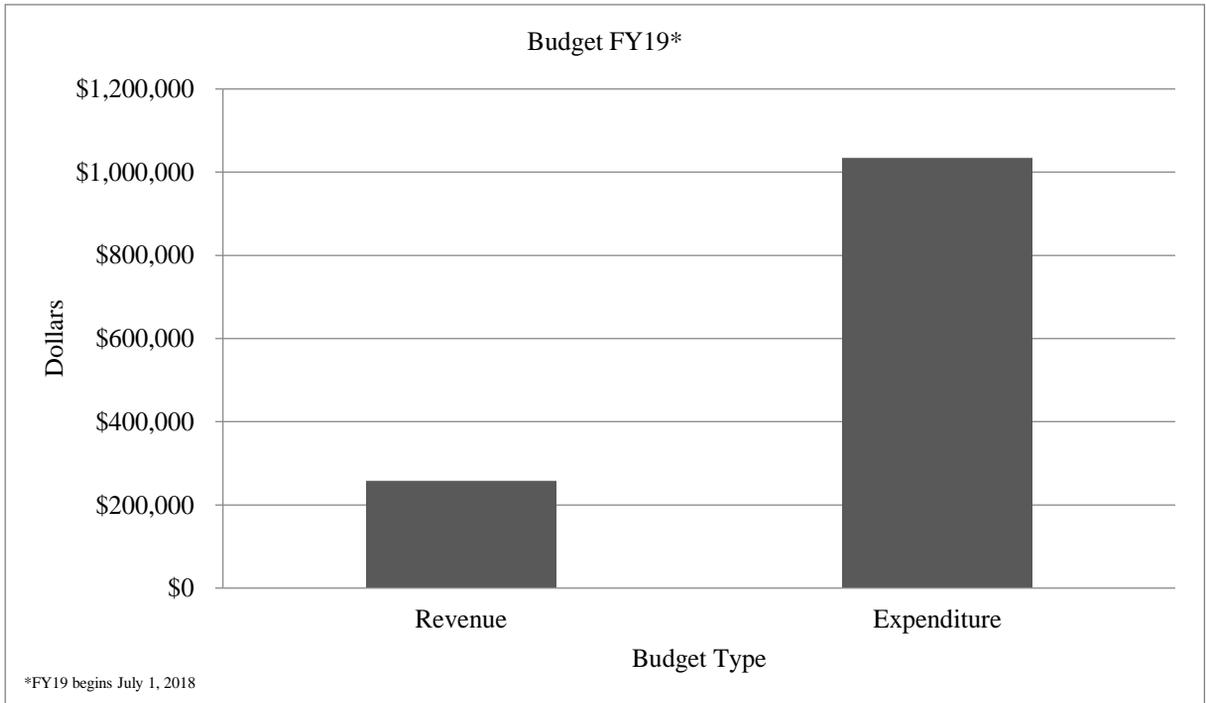


Figure 11.3.

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Organ and Tissue Donation

JCME has a crucial role in the coordination of organ and tissue donation. In 2017, 22 accepted JCME cases became organ donors. From these 22 individuals, Iowa Donor Network coordinated the recovery of 32 kidneys, 12 livers, 6 lungs, 9 hearts, 2 pancreases, and 1 small intestine for transplant. Sixteen accepted JCME cases became tissue and cornea donors with the recovery of bone, skin, heart valves, and saphenous veins, femoral veins, adipose tissue, and/or joints.

One tissue donor can enhance the lives of more than 300 people. JCME fully supports organ and tissue donation and, by policy, JCME refers all out-of-hospital deaths that fall under our jurisdiction to Iowa Donor Network.

Table 12.1. Organs Transplanted from JCME Accepted Cases (2017)*

Organs Transplanted*	
Hearts	9
Lungs	6
Livers	12
Kidneys	32
Pancreases	2
Small Intestines	1
Total organ donors**	22

*Information supplied by Iowa Donor Network

**Total number of decedents who donated organs

Table 12.2. Tissues Transplanted from JCME Accepted Cases (2017)*

Tissues Transplanted*	
Cornea Donors	9
Bone Donors	6
Skin Donors	5
Heart Valve Donors	4
Saphenous Vein Donors	2
Femoral Vein Donors	3
Adipose Tissue Donors	2
Joint Restoration Donors	1
Total recovered tissue donors**	7
Total recovered cornea donors***	9
Total recovered tissue and cornea donors	16

*Information supplied by Iowa Donor Network

**Total number of decedents who donated tissue

***Total number of decedents who donated corneas