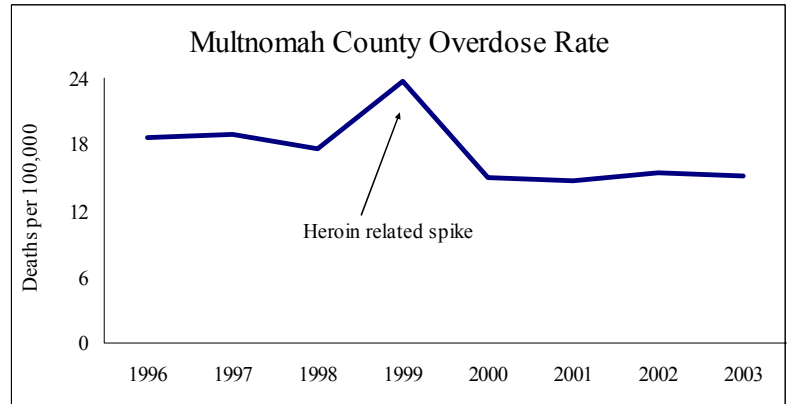
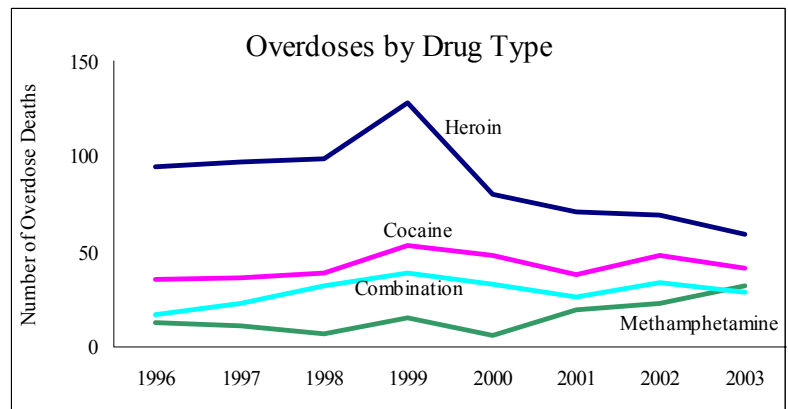


A BRIEF EXAMINATION OF OVERDOSE TRENDS IN MULTNOMAH COUNTY

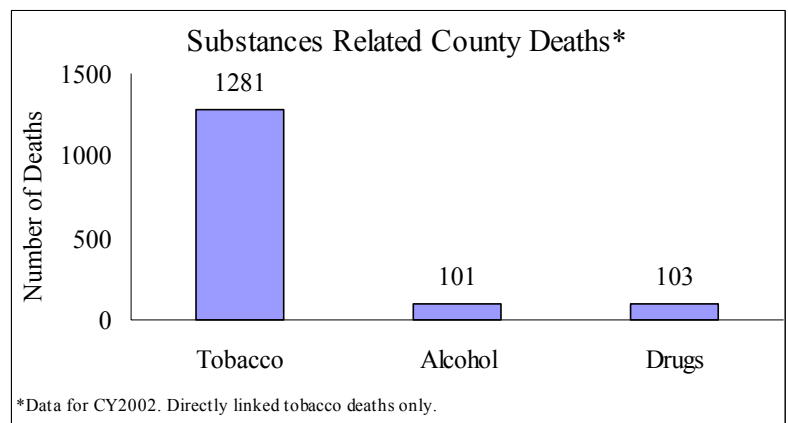
The following brief identifies the drug overdoses in Multnomah County for the past nine years. The data reported herein was made available by the State Medical Examiner's Office.¹ Results show that overall overdose rates and totals have declined since 1996. However, the rate over the last four years has remained relatively flat. Multnomah County had 103 reported overdose deaths in 2003.



Similar to a recent report, the type of drug related to overdoses has changed over the last few years.² While heroin is still the leading substance related to overdose deaths, it has been on the decline, and 2003 was the lowest year reported herein. The proportion of overdoses due to heroin has decreased from 80% in 1996 to 57% in 2003. Methamphetamines deaths have increased over the last four years, while cocaine has remained relatively flat.



To lend perspective to the number of drug deaths, the following chart shows the number of deaths directly due to tobacco and alcohol. Consistent with the recent Robert Wood Johnson report, the number of deaths due directly to tobacco was substantially higher than either drug or alcohol deaths.³ The number of alcohol related deaths was consistent with all drug overdose death combined.



¹ Source: Eugene Gray, Oregon State Medical Examiner Office (Multnomah County site).

² Caubet, S. & Nice, M. L. (2004). *Local Trends in Illicit Substance Use*. Budget Office

³ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2001). *Substance Abuse: The Nation's Number One Health Problem*. pg. 6.

The proportion of alcohol related deaths compared to drugs in Multnomah County was considerably lower than what was reported nationally in the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation report.