

OPINION

Oregon physicians have obligation to speak against gun violence

Dr. Marianne Parshley, Dr. Robyn Liu, Dr. Lynn Bentson, Guest column Published 2:41 p.m. PT Nov. 16, 2018



(Photo: Special to the Statesman Journal)

On Oct. 30, *Annals of Internal Medicine*, the journal of the American College of Physicians (ACP), published articles that described the epidemiology of firearms-related injuries and deaths, outlined the position of ACP on methods to prevent those injuries and deaths, and issued physicians a call to action to speak out on this subject to protect public health.

In response to that issue, the NRA made a public statement about the ACP and the *Annals of Internal Medicine* characterizing us as “self-important anti-gun doctors” and warned physicians to “stay in our lane.”

In doing so, the NRA succeeded only in reminding those of us in medicine precisely why it is we must make our voices heard. It sparked an outcry on social media from all those who care for the victims of firearm-related injuries and deaths.

Using the hashtag #ThisIsOurLane, clinicians in the U.S. have described their experiences attempting to save lives, staunch bleeding, mend wounds, and support our patients’ loved ones when our attempts to heal are futile.

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Unwilling, physicians in this country have become experts in dealing with the health effects of gun violence.

When we put on our white coats, we put our personal politics aside. Our first concern is the health and wellness of the people who have trusted us to help care for them whatever their political belief.

We recognize some of the most important work we do for our patients takes place outside the four walls of the clinic or hospital. We speak on matters of public health because of our duty to our patients, but also because we want the communities where we live and work to be healthy, safe, and resilient.

We take care of patients with lung cancer, emphysema, and heart disease, and that's why we speak out about the dangers of tobacco. We take care of patients who have been injured in motor vehicle accidents, and that's why we advocate to make our cars and our roads safer. And we take care of patients who have been wounded by firearms, and that's why we insist on researching firearm-related injuries and deaths and look for common-sense solutions to address the epidemic of gun violence — assaults, murders, accidents, and suicides — that's consuming our country.

We're proud to be members of a profession that puts people ahead of politics. We are proud to support a medical journal unafraid to publish the truth about our ongoing epidemic of firearm violence, to further the national conversation on prevention, and to propose sensible solutions to make our patients and our communities safer.

We are proud to stand up for ourselves and for our patients, to any organization that wants to silence our voices and keep us from doing our very best for those who trust us with their health and wellbeing.

We are doctors. We are Americans. We are families and friends of those whose lives have been destroyed by firearms, and some of us have been victims ourselves. But above all, we are united in demanding immediate action to address the crisis of gun violence that is afflicting the country we love and its people whom we serve.

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