

# The Register-Guard

---

Opinion

## **Obley: Public health is doctors' concern. So are guns.**

**By Adam Obley**

Posted Nov 18, 2018 at 12:01 AM

On Oct. 30, *Annals of Internal Medicine*, the journal of the American College of Physicians, published articles that described the epidemiology of firearms-related injuries and deaths, outlined the college's position on prevention methods and issued a call to action for physicians to speak out on this subject as a matter of protecting the public health.

The new statement updates and elaborates on the college's previous position published in 2014, and includes recommendations built on 20 years of study and careful consideration. The articles in that issue, including the editorials, were thoughtful, evidence-based, measured in tone, and intended to advance our national conversation on this difficult topic.

In response to the issue, the NRA made a public statement about the college 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 we must make our voices heard, and sparked an immense outcry on social media from all those who care for the victims of firearms. 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. Unwillingly, 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 our patients. We work hard to keep our own politics out of the exam room, and we take pride in providing excellent care to people from all backgrounds and of every political belief.

We also recognize that some of the most important work we do for our patients takes place outside the four walls of the clinic or the hospital. We speak out on matters of public health because of our duty to our patients, but also because we care about all of our friends and neighbors. 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 with opioid use disorder, and that's why we have tried to do our part in responding to the opioid epidemic. 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 looking for common sense solutions to address the epidemic of gun violence—of assaults, murders, accidents, and suicides—that is consuming our country.

We're proud to be members of a profession that puts people ahead of politics and speaks out on important public health issues, whether it's tobacco, opioids or guns. We are proud to support a medical journal that is 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 well-being.

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 that we love and its people whom we serve.

*Dr. Adam Obley, MD, FACP, is the chair of the Health and Public Policy Committee of the Oregon Chapter of the American College of Physicians. Endorsing his viewpoint are Dr. Marianne Parshley, MD, FACP, governor of the Oregon Chapter of the American College of Physicians, and Dr. Robyn Liu, MD, MPH,*

*FAAFP, president of the Oregon Academy of Family Physicians;*