Aiming for Better: Addressing Gun Safety in the Clinic

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Conflicts of Interest

Siobhan D. Wilson has no relevant financial relationships with ineligible companies to disclose.

Siobhan D. Wilson does not intend to discuss any unlabeled/unapproved uses of drugs/devices in the presentation.

Admission of Limitations

Siobhan D. Wilson held a gun for the first time in 2023

Siobhan D. Wilson is not a legal expert

Siobhan D. Wilson is pursuing health related advocacy as of Nov '22

Learning Objectives

After this lecture, you will be able to...

1. Recall what medical organizations have or are developing position statements or guidelines regarding guns and medicine
2. Identify at least one reference that will allow you to quickly access high quality, evidence-based information on guns and medicine
3. Identify at least one high quality, evidence-based resource for patient education on gun safety
4. Recommend “safer,” evidence-based behaviors to your patients regarding gun ownership and use
5. Develop (or borrow!) verbal scripts and/or note templates for counseling regarding gun safety
6. Complete a gun safety plan with a patient

Jan 24, 2022

May 10, 2023

Madison clinic evacuated after accidental active shooter alert

Hoy

So, before I say anything, respond as fast as possible. We're a school and there's an active threat happening. I'm really worried and need someone to help me. Please respond as fast as you can.

Hoy

Middleton High School Staff. We received word that a student was on campus with a gun in his backpack. The student's name is [Redacted]. We believe he has exited the building but have not confirmed. Please continue to keep students safe.
"If it’s not a health problem, then why are all those people dying from it?"

- Dr. David Satcher, 1993

**All Those People**

2022: > 44K

Majority: suicides

> 76K more injured and survive

<1% Mass shootings

**IN WISCONSIN**

- Average year: 678 people die by guns
  - 66% suicide
  - 1,028 injured and survive
  - Gun death rate: 11.5 per 100K
  - 37th highest in the US

- From 2012 to 2021:
  - Gun death rate up 62% [US: 39%]
  - Gun suicide rate up 33% [US: 19%]
  - Gun homicide rate up 123% [US: 73%]

**All Those Children**

2020: Firearms became the leading cause of death for children and adolescents (1-19) in the US

**Why US?**
An American Culture

US vs. other high income OECD countries (2010):
• Most civilian-owned guns in the world
  • >2x Yemen
• 120 guns per 100 adults
• ~1 in 3 US households has a gun
• Gun exposure even higher:
  • 72% adults have shot a gun
  • 2/3 have lived in households with guns
  • ~1/2 grew up in households with guns

An American Problem

US vs. other high income OECD countries (2010):
• All cause firearm death rates 10.0 x higher
• Gun homicide rates 25.2 x higher
  • Homicide rates 7x higher
• Gun suicide rates 8x higher
  • overall suicide rates average
• Unintentional gun death rate 6.2 x higher

An American Equity Problem

Black Americans are disproportionately affected by gun violence compared to white Americans. Black Americans experience:
• 10x more gun homicides (~30/day)
• 18x more gun assault injuries (~110/day)
• ~3x more fatal police shootings (1 e/o/d)
• Worse in large cities (Black Americans 68%)
• Worse in underserved communities

Firearm myths vs. reality

• Most Americans purchase guns for protection
  1
• 81% of gun owners say having a gun in the home makes them feel safer
  2
BUT
• A gun in the home increases firearm risks
  3
  • Suicide OR 3.24
  • Homicide OR 1.94 (2.84 for women)

“No Way To Prevent This,” Says Only Nation Where This Regularly Happens

So What?

There Is A Lot We Can Do

We Occupy a Unique Role

So How?
Objective 1: Recall position statement organizations

- American College of Physicians (2018)
- American College of Surgeons (2018)
- AAFP (2018)
- American Psychiatric Association (2015)
- American Association of Pediatrics (2022)

Medical Summit on Firearm Injury Prevention

- Inaugurated 2019
- Most recent meeting in Chicago, Sept 10-11, 2022
- Cohosted by
  - American College of Surgeons
  - American College of Physicians
  - American College of Emergency Physicians
  - American Academy of Pediatrics
  - Council of Medical Specialty Societies
  - (47 total)
- Proceedings published June, 2023

My "Trusted Nerds"

Position Statements and Recommendations:
1. Public Health Approach
2. We have a special responsibility
3. Supports regulating firearm purchases
4. Guns should be subject to consumer product regulation
5. Firearm owners should adhere to best practices
6. ACP cautions against broadly including those with mental health diagnoses in "dangerous" category
7. Favors legislation to ban semiautomatic firearms and retain automatic weapons ban
8. Supports efforts to modify firearms to improve safety
9. More research is needed!
   - Accurate data are critical to understanding
   - CDC, NIH, NIJ should receive adequate funding
10. Supports enactment of ERPO laws

What Role(s) Can We Play?
There are no state or federal statutes prohibiting discussions about a patient’s access to firearms. Most patients (2 of 3) feel it is at least sometimes appropriate for health care providers to discuss firearms with their patients. However, only 8% of American adults living in homes with firearms have had a physician bring it up to them.
Why Aren’t We Asking??

Our Barriers are Common Barriers!
- Lack familiarity with firearms
- Lack familiarity with risks and benefits
- Lack familiarity with resources
- Concern for effectiveness
- Concern for reaction
- Personal belief (outside scope of practice)
- No time

Our Barriers are Surmountable!
We know how to do this for other subjects!
- A kind of cultural competence
- MANY resources available
- Many evidence-based methods & interventions

Objective 2:
Identify trusted reference (background info)

Objective 3:
Identify trusted reference (patient education)

Objective 4:
Recommend safer behaviors

Objective 5:
Develop scripts

UC Davis: BulletPoints Project
- Web resources
- Patient Printables
- Blog
- E-mail newsletter
- Webinars
- CME
**BulletPoints Project: CME**

Preventing Firearm Injury: What Clinicians Can Do

- Free
- 1 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™

[https://continuingeducation.bulletpointsproject.org/courses/preventing-firearm-injury/](https://continuingeducation.bulletpointsproject.org/courses/preventing-firearm-injury/)

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**The 3 A’s Framework**

- Approach
- Assess
- Act
- Advocate

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**Approach**

Approach

- Address knowledge gaps!
- Ask your patients!

[https://www.bulletpointsproject.org/](https://www.bulletpointsproject.org/)

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**So How Do We Ask?**

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**Approach (Ask)**

About 1 in 3 US households has a gun, and gun owners are a diverse group.

It is difficult to accurately predict who does and doesn’t own a gun.

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**Approach (Ask)**

- Be informed
- Be respectful – practice cultural humility
- Focus on harm reduction
- Be individualized
- Language matters!

[https://www.bulletpointsproject.org/](https://www.bulletpointsproject.org/)
Cultural Competency

- Research suggests gun owners prefer:
  - Non-judgmental language
  - Language emphasizing autonomy

[Just like all other motivational interviewing!]

Assess

- Risk factors
- Ideation or threats
- Access to guns
- Willingness to collaborate

Assess

Try using the 5 L’s:

Locked?  
Loaded?  
Little children?  
Feeling Low?  
Learned owner?

Assess

Risk Factors

- Psychiatric d/o (i.e., MDD, BPDO, schizophrenia)
- AODA (esp alcohol, stimulants)
- PMH suicide attempts
- PSH: violence, IPV
- Dementia/cognitive impairment
- Stressors: recent relationship or job loss
- Unsafe gun storage
- Veteran
- Vulnerable residents in the home (including visitors!):
  - Children
  - Anyone with above risks

Assess for access:

- “A lot of my patients have guns at home. Are there any firearms in or around your home?”
- “Have you thought about how to keep your kids safe around your guns?”
- “What do you think about storing your guns off-site until the situation improves?”

https://www.bulletpointsproject.org/how-to-counsel/

Objective 5: Develop scripts

Free Lethal Means Counseling Course
Objective 4: Recommend safer behaviors

- Treat high risk "comorbidities"
- Counsel safer gun storage
- Remove guns from high risk situations
- Follow up after any intervention
  - Risk amplifiers change over time!

Gun Storage

- Less than half (~46%) of gun owners report safely storing ALL of their guns
- The safest way to store a gun is “triple locked”
  1. Unloaded
  2. Locked up (with device)
  3. Separate from ammunition
  - Inaccessible to children, unauthorized users, others at risk
    - (hidden keys, secret combinations, biometric)

Does Storage Counseling Work?

Effectiveness of Interventions to Promote Safe Firearm Storage

Ali Rowhani-Rahbar, Joseph A. Simonetti, and Frederick P. Rivara

- Systematic review of safe firearm storage interventions
- 7 studies (heterogenous)
  - 3 provided safety device → significantly improved storage practices
  - 3 of 4 counseling only → no effect
- Summary: overall suggests interventions are helpful

Act

- Safe Storage
- LM counseling/Temporary Transfer
- Mental Health Hold
- Civil Protective Order (e.g., ERPO)

Gun Storage Resources

- Bullet Points Project
  - https://www.bulletpointsproject.org
- National Shooting Sports Foundation
- NRA
  - https://www.nrafamily.org/content/6-ways-to-safely-store-your-firearms-2/

Does Storage Counseling Work?

Lethal Means Counseling, Distribution of Cable Locks, and Safe Firearm Storage Practices Among the Mississippi National Guard: A Factorial Randomized Controlled Trial, 2018–2020

- 232 firearm-owning members of the Mississippi National Guard
  - Counseling vs control; counseling alone vs + lock
  - 3, 6 mo follow up
  - LM counseling alone: increased use of gun safes/locking devices 40%
  - LM + cable locks: 2x more likely to use locking devices
Eastern Association for the Surgery of Trauma

• PICO 1: We conditionally recommend that gun locks be used to prevent unintentional firearm injury. (LOE: Level III)

• PICO 2: Because of the large effect size and the reasonable quality of available evidence with safe storage of firearms, we recommend safe storage prevent firearm-related injuries. (LOE: Level III)

Gun Storage – Guideline Statements

J Trauma Acute Care Surg. 2018;84: 1003–1011

Suicide Death Rates in the U.S. by Method (1996-2016)

The lethality of a suicide attempt is one of the biggest factors determining whether the person lives or dies.

Guns and Suicide Risk

Only 5% of suicide attempts are by firearm, BUT
• 50% of completed US suicides are by firearm
• ~90% of suicide attempts by firearm result in death
• Majority of near-lethal SA made with little planning
• Firearm in the house → 3x risk of completed SA
• Time and distance → saves lives

Research Suggests Warning Signs

Of people who die by suicide in the US
• ~40% of people are seen by PCPs within the preceding month
• >75% within the preceding year
• ~80% of people considering suicide show signs
• Active shooters display 4-5 warning behaviors prior to act
  – Mental Health
  – Problematic interpersonal interactions
  – Other signs of violent intentions

• Like a sentinel bleed

Model: Reducing Access to Lethal Means

More people stop an attempt than complete it. Irreversibility of the method matters.
Does Storage Counseling Reduce Harms?

- Counseling patients on safer storage practices has been associated with increased rates of safer storage among gun owners.
- Firearm owners who practice safer storage practices (locked, unloaded) are at least 60% less likely to by firearm related suicide compared to owners who do not.

Objective 6:
Complete a gun safety plan

Temporary transfer
- Focus on words like "voluntary" and "temporary"
- Focus on specific, feasible plans
- Potential sites:
  - Family members (WI: no background ✓ or license req)*
  - Gun shops/ranges
  - Law enforcement
  - Storage facilities**
  - Pawn shops


**Check facility policies

Temporary Transfers
- Wisconsin Gun Shop Project:
  - https://www.betherewis.com/firearm-storage-online-map/
  - https://safercommunity.net/gun-shop-project/resources
- Hold My Guns non-profit:
  - https://www.holdmyguns.org/

Does Temporary Transfer Work?
- Data needed
**Act**

- Safe Storage
- LM Counseling/Temporary Transfer
- Mental Health Hold (5150)
- Civil Protective Order (e.g., ERPO)

**Extreme Risk Protection Order**

- Temporarily remove firearms from people who may pose a risk to themselves or others
- Involuntary
- 21 states + DC
- Heterogenous
- Requested by 3rd parties
  - Law enforcement
  - Family/household members
  - Employers/Co-workers
  - Educators
  - “Only 5/21 allow Medical petitioners

**The 3 A’s Framework**

- Temporarily remove firearms from people who may pose a risk to themselves or others
- Involuntary
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**Do ERPOs work?**

Following 1999 enactment of ERPO law in CT (’99-13):
- For every 10-20 guns removed from someone in crisis
- 1 suicide was prevented
- NNT = 10-20

Swanson JW et al., Law and Contemporary Problems 179-208 (2017)

Following 2005 enactment of ERPO law in IN (’05-15)
- 7.5% reduction in firearm suicides


**Resources on Firearm Laws**

- Giffords Law Center
  - [https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/](https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/)
- NRA-ILA website
- Johns Hopkins (ERPO)
  - [https://americanhealth.jhu.edu/implementERPO](https://americanhealth.jhu.edu/implementERPO)
- Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
- RAND: State Firearm Law Database
  - [https://www.rand.org/pubs/tools/TLA243-2-v2.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/tools/TLA243-2-v2.html)

**I’m Not A Lawyer, but…**

- Giffords Law Center
- NRA-ILA website
- Johns Hopkins (ERPO)
- Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
- RAND: State Firearm Law Database
How do gun policies affect outcomes?

**RAND Corporation**

Thicker line = stronger evidence

![Graph showing the impact of gun policies on outcomes](https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy.html)

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### Recent Federal Legislation

- Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (S2938)
  - Signed into law June 2022
  - Funding to establish state ERPOs
  - Closes “boyfriend” loophole (dating/intimate partners)
  - Funds community violence intervention programs
  - Req. enhanced background ✓ < 21 yo for long guns
  - Addresses gun trafficking
  - Updates language re: licensed gun sellers
  - May 14, 2023: Executive Action supporting above

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### 2023-2025 Wisconsin Legislation

- 5/2/23: All gun violence prevention budget items removed by JCF
- Reintroduced as bills June 2023
  - AB 368: Universal background checks
  - AB 350: ERPOs
  - AB 352: Sales tax exemption for gun safes/locks
  - AB 173, AB 355: Gun Shop Project
- Fall Floor Periods
  - September 12 - 21; October 10 - 19; November 7 - 16

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### Wisconsin: AJR 038 – introduced 5/8

Bipartisan Joint Resolution on Gun Violence Awareness Day (June 2, 2023)

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### How to get involved

**FIRST AND FOREMOST:**

Check your institution’s advocacy policies!

Medical advocacy groups

- HAVI
- AFFIRM
- #This Is Our Lane (WI)

Society-associated advocacy

- ACP
- WMS

State/National Community

- Moms Demand Action
- WAVE
- WI Coalition for Gun Safety

Write an Op-Ed

- June: Gun Violence Awareness
- Sept: Suicide Awareness
- Oct: Domestic Violence Awareness

Legislative advocacy

- Contact your Rep/Sen
- Public hearings on bills (*online*)
**ACP-WI**

Gun Violence Prevention Advocacy Workgroup

- Mara Terras, MD, FACP
  - mara.terras@gmail.com
- Sophie Kramer, MD, FACP
  - dsophiekramer@gmail.com
- Siobhan Wilson, MD, PhD, FACP
  - dr.siobhanwilson@gmail.com
- & more!

**Wisconsin Coalition for Gun Safety**

- Co-chairs:
  - Rep. Shelia Stubbs
    - Rep.Stubbs@legis.wisconsin.gov
  - Rep. Deb Andraca
    - Rep.Andraca@legis.wisconsin.gov
  - Sen. LaTonya Johnson
    - contact via website

- Monthly meetings (9/11 @ 3:00P)
  - https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcpf

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**Take Home Points**

- There are evidence-based ways to reduce harms from firearms
- Medical providers have a special role we can play in reducing firearm injuries

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**References**

References

5. Shillinglaw BF, Effectiveness of Interventions to Promote Safe Firearm Storage, 2014.

Additional Resources

Lethal Means Counseling Scripts

Collaborative/Guiding
“Lots of people have guns at home. Some will store their guns outside of their home temporarily—such as at a relative’s house or a gun shop—until they are feeling better. What do you think about a strategy like that?”

Directive
“I’m going to recommend that for now you store your guns away from home. Is that something you could do?”

References – web

A shooting caused hundreds of people to flee for safety from the Fourth of July parade in Highland Park, Ill., on July 4, 2021. (AP Photo/Nam Y. Huh) A shooting caused hundreds of people to flee for safety from the Fourth of July parade in Highland Park, Ill., on July 4, 2021. (AP Photo/Nam Y. Huh)

What do you think about a strategy like that?”

Additional Resources

- Sample letters to legislators
- Related Injuries and Deaths
- What do you think about a strategy like that?”

Thank you!
Not willing to disclose
“Will you tell me what you’re worried would happen if you say you have a gun? I may be able to ease those worries.”

Patients worried about you “taking away” their guns
“I am not questioning your right to own guns. Since you’ve talked about feeling suicidal, I’m concerned about helping you stay safe. Have you also been concerned?”

Worried about confidentiality
“Before we talk about your specific situation, I can let you know what sort of information I will write down and what I can omit.”

When in doubt:
• Lead with curiosity!
• Honor patient values and autonomy
• Build collaborative relationships

Patients willing to collaborate:
• Online interactive Lethal Means Decision Aid
  • https://lock2live.org/
• VA resource
  • https://www.va.gov/reach/lethal-means/
• Safety in Dementia
  • https://safetyindementia.org/

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https://safetyindementia.org/

Safety Starts with You
Caring for someone with dementia can be hard.
There are physical, emotional, financial, and social changes to love. There are also new issues to deal with. Throwing away those safety concerns can prevent lapses and deaths.
How to be sure to make choices and plans for the future. You may have already thought about some ways to improve safety at home. You may have had discussions about what to do about driving or firearms access. This site can support those discussions.

“Safety in Dementia” offers a guide to safety for those with dementia. It offers information, resources, and tools to help families and caregivers make informed decisions about safety and dementia.

https://firearmlifeplan.org/
People Prohibited from Receiving Firearms may not receive transfers

- Under federal law, 18 U.S.C. § 922(d), no person may purchase or possess a firearm if they fall into the following categories, nor may any person knowingly sell, deliver, or otherwise transfer a firearm to any person falling into these categories:
  - Is under indictment for or has been convicted in any court of a felony;
  - Is a fugitive from justice;
  - Is a drug user;
  - Has been adjudicated as a mental defective or committed to a mental institution;
  - Is an illegal alien;
  - Has been dishonorably discharged from the armed forces;
  - Has renounced his or her citizenship;
  - Is subject to a court order issued after a hearing which restrains him or her from intimate partner violence; or
  - Has been convicted of a misdemeanor domestic violence offense.

Who can accept Temporary Transfer?

Harvard: Means Matter
https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/recommendations/families/

Upcoming Advocacy Opportunities

- **WAVE 2023 Day of Action for Gun Violence Prevention**: September 21st from 10 am - 3 pm
  - https://secure.everyaction.com/2jIDz9xKeHs-kvRJmlyw2

- **Moms Demand Action Statewide Advocacy Day**: October 17th at 9 am (Training Day October 15th)
  - https://act.everytown.org/event/moms-demand-action-event/53233/signup/?_gl=1*hxikp*_ga*MjA5MzE2MjA4MC4xNiNjg5ODEzMTc3*ga_1T6FW3EK3*MTY5MTUyNjI0NS4yLjEuMTY5MTUyNjI3MC4wLJwMA..

The Dickey Amendment, 1996

- Omnibus spending bill rider
- Prohibits use of CDC funds for advocacy or promotion of gun control.

Firearm-injury prevention is NOT this

- Consequences:
  - $0 appropriated to CDC to study gun-violence prevention
  - NIH funding <2% of predicted based on burden of disease

Funding deficit after Dickey

[Graph showing funding deficit after Dickey Amendment]