



ISSUE

Working to prevent firearm injury and death

MMA Position

To prevent firearm injury and death, the MMA supports common sense changes to gun laws, as well as addressing the issue with research and evidence-based strategies that can reduce morbidity and mortality.

Background

Gun violence and firearm-related accidents kill more than 30,000 Americans each year. Firearm injury and death is a public health crisis. Strategies needed to prevent and address this crisis include advocacy for firearm injury and death research funding, common sense gun laws at the state and federal level, as well as equipping physicians with the necessary tools to discuss firearm injury and death prevention in the exam room.

In Minnesota, there were more than 400 firearm-related deaths in 2017, with more than 300 of these deaths being suicides. In addition, suicide accounts for nearly 80 percent of all firearm-related deaths, with men overwhelmingly choosing firearms as their primary method. Firearms were also the leading method of suicide for adolescents aged 15 to 19.

Among developed nations, the U.S. has the most gun violence against women, with women being nearly 16 times more likely to die by firearm. Many of these deaths are the result of intimate partner violence, also referred to as domestic violence.

Appropriate research funding is needed to gain a better understanding of gun violence and is needed to develop programs that will assist in the prevention of premature deaths from guns. Epidemiologic data is not consistently collected, and much of this is due to not all U.S. states reporting their surveillance data to the National Violent Death Reporting System. This creates a barrier for public health researcher's ability to study gun violence.

The MMA considers firearm injury and death a public health crisis and calls on policymakers at the state

and national level to step up and protect the health and safety of Minnesotans. Three examples of what Minnesota can do to prevent firearm injury and death include: 1) expanding criminal background checks to all firearm transfers and sales; 2) enacting a "red flag" law to allow law enforcement to protect those who may be a danger to themselves or others; and 3) authorizing the use of firearm ownership data for public health research or epidemiologic investigation.

Talking Points

- The MMA supports common-sense changes to gun laws that will promote safe and responsible gun ownership including:
 - Criminal background checks on all purchases and transfers/exchanges of firearms
 - Enforcement of laws that will hold sellers accountable when they sell firearms to prohibited purchasers
 - Investment in improved data collection, analysis and research on firearm injury prevention
 - Strengthening of the ban on civilian ownership of military-style weapons
 - Prohibiting high-capacity magazines.
 - Requirements for the safe storage of firearms.
- The MMA supports improved access to and coverage of comprehensive mental health services.
- Most individuals with mental illness are not violent and not responsible for gun violence. This misconception stigmatizes those with mental illness and distracts us from awareness that a large percentage of firearm deaths are due to suicide.
- The MMA encourages and supports the identification of individuals at risk for violence or self-harm.
- Physicians and other health care providers have a responsibility to talk to patients about responsible firearm ownership and safe storage in the home.

Suicide in Minnesota (1999-2017), Data Brief, Accessed Dec. 17, 2019 - <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/documents/2017suicidedata-brief.pdf>

American Academy of Family Physicians, Accessed Dec. 17, 2019 - <https://www.aafp.org/about/policies/all/gun-violence.html>