

Alliances, Community Action, Laws And Statistics: Where Does Firearm Injury And Gun Violence Prevention Work Fit Within Public Health In Oregon?

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Moderator: James A. Gaudino, Jr.

TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: Topic: Firearm injury surveillance & prevention

Target Audience: Public health and health care practitioners, researchers, and students in the state and local public health departments and in other settings who address the health and wellbeing of Oregon communities especially for vulnerable people; Community members who advocate to improve their community's and individual health and wellbeing; decision and policy makers.

ABSTRACT: In the US, firearms are associated with over 100,000 deaths and injuries annually. Since 2009, Oregon's firearm fatalities have exceeded traffic fatalities. About two thirds of deaths are suicides. By the mid-1990s, public health's role in firearm injury surveillance, program evaluation, prevention and mitigation research, education and intervention was expanded. However, federal laws were changed and, two decades later, public health entities remain virtually uninvolved and approaches untapped. Federal legislation is stalled despite increasingly visible gun violence such as the attack at Umpqua Community College in Roseburg, Oregon. Despite the availability of population-level injury, disability and mortality data, there are continued funding and political challenges, and knowledge gaps remain about effective interventions. Advocates for prevention remain active, promoting state-level legislation to mitigate the toll of firearm violence. The Oregon Alliance for Gun Safety successfully convenes advocate, faith, gun owner and public health groups to work closer together. Through these collaborations, Oregon recently passed legislation expanding background checks and strengthening prevention legislation. This session invites participants to hear updates on firearm injury epidemiology and research findings, learn about current policy and prevention efforts by community-member groups and answer whether and how Oregon public health intersects with gun violence mitigation and prevention activities.

OBJECTIVE(S):

- Clearly state key points and myths about the 1997 federal law changes related to federally-funded firearm research and public health practice, e.g., the Dickey Amendment, and the consequences of these laws on public health's involvement in firearm violence prevention
- Describe the epidemiology and impact of firearm injury violence on public health, and knowledge gaps in Oregon
- Identify the characteristics of gun violence in Oregon
- Describe the issue of suicide prevention in the context of limiting access to lethal means
- Compare two studies that examined the culturally specific conversation between primary care providers and clients that might have meaningful impact on firearm safety and voluntary removal of firearms during a crisis

- Describe the current state of advocacy efforts to reduce the impact of gun violence in Oregon by community advocate and citizen organizations and new opportunities created by the Oregon Alliance for Gun Safety coalition
- Recognize the injury prevention and control model as applied to firearm injury and violence prevention
- Discuss potential prevention strategies to reduce gun violence and describe knowledge gaps
- Discuss and answer whether public health has a role in reducing firearm injury and, if so, propose ways that community partners and public health might work together to prevent firearm injuries and mitigate their impacts in Oregon.

PANEL ABSTRACT 1: Presentation Title: Gun Violence in Oregon

Presenter: Xun Shen, MD, MPH

Co-author(s): Lisa Millet, MPH

Abstract: This presentation will provide an overview of firearm violence in the U.S., compare Oregon firearm injuries and deaths to the U.S., and highlight findings from the data of the Oregon Violent Death Reporting System (OVDRS). The United States has the highest rate of gun-related injuries among developed countries. Oregon's firearm fatality rate is similar to that of the U.S. (11.69 vs 10.25 per 100,000 in 2014). The intent associated with the majority of firearm deaths in Oregon is suicide. Most firearm-related fatal injuries involve one death. Among incidents with multiple deaths, approximately 75% were homicide-suicide events, and 19% were multiple-homicide events. Males were nearly six times more likely than females to die from firearm injury. Older males (age >65 years of age) had the highest firearm death rate, due to high suicide rates. Young adults ages 18 to 24 years were at the highest risk of being a victim of homicide by firearm. Weapons used in firearm fatalities were handguns (73%), rifles (15%), and shotguns (11%). Forty-one percent of people who died by firearm suicide had a depressed mood and 28% were being treated for a mental illness.

Learning Objectives:

- Describe the epidemiology and impact of gun violence on public health in Oregon
- Identify the characteristics of gun violence in Oregon

PANEL ABSTRACT 2: Presentation Title: The Culture Gap: Understanding Suicide Prevention and Limiting Access to Lethal Means using Culturally Competent Framing

Presenter: Elizabeth Marino, PhD

Co-author(s): Christopher Wolsko, PhD; Susan Keys, PhD; Laura Pennavaria, MD

Abstract: Research supports limiting access to lethal means, particularly firearms, as a method of suicide prevention. Primary care settings could potentially provide counseling for patients at risk of suicide on the importance of voluntarily limiting access to firearms during periods of crisis. We hypothesized that counseling framed in terms of culturally relevant values will be most successful.

Focus groups and key informant interviews were conducted with rural firearm owners to identify culturally appropriate messaging for promoting firearm safety with patients at risk of suicide. Following, researchers conducted a nation-wide survey of over 900 gun owners, testing four intervention conditions: (1) a control, (2) a standard public health suicide prevention message, (3) a culturally competent message derived from focus group data, and (4) a combined standard public health message plus culturally competent message.

Results indicated that the culturally competent message and the combined message increased the willingness of survey respondents to remove lethal means when a friend, family member, or they themselves were experiencing suicidal ideation, compared to the other conditions. Culturally competent language moved attitudes most significantly among political conservatives and strong pro-gun advocates. These results were mediated by the strength of belief that messaging was coming from one's "ingroup."

Learning Objectives:

- Describe the issue of suicide prevention in the context of limiting access to lethal means.
- Compare two studies that examined the culturally specific conversation between primary care providers and clients that might have meaningful impact on firearm safety and voluntary removal of firearms during a crisis

PANEL ABSTRACT 3: Presentation Title: Ceasefire Oregon's Work and the Convening Power of the Oregon Alliance for Gun Safety

Presenter: Penny Okamoto

Co-author(s): Jake Weigler

Abstract: Oregon is one of 14 states where firearm deaths outnumber car fatalities. Since 1994, Ceasefire Oregon Education Foundation (COEF) has worked to prevent gun violence through education programs including ASK (Asking Saves Kids), suicide prevention and gun turn-ins.

In 2001, COEF formed an alliance with a legislative advocacy group, Oregonians Against Gun Violence, to create Ceasefire Oregon (CO). CO works to reduce gun violence by advocating reasonable, effective gun laws; educating the public and legislators about gun violence and working to prevent the passage of bills that would reduce public safety.

The Oregon Alliance for Gun Safety was founded in 2013 as a coalition of more than fifty diverse groups that support gun violence prevention, including Gun Owners for Responsible Ownership, Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense, Everytown for Gun Safety, the Brady Campaign and CO. Through the Alliance, these groups as well as faith communities, service organizations, nonprofits, and community leaders have worked together to reduce gun violence.

The high level of cooperation, communication and respect between the Alliance groups created a synergy that is one of the most important keys to educating Oregonians about gun violence, changing public attitudes about gun laws and passing strong, effective firearm legislation.

Learning Objective:

- Describe the current state of advocacy efforts in Oregon to reduce the impact of gun violence.

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