

Gun violence - A public health perspective

Jan. 28, 2013 10:00 a.m. Gun Violence Prevention Working Group LOB. Room 2C

Christine Pattee, MPH, DrPH
98 Brookline Rd. Coventry CT 06238
860-742-6511
c2pattee@aol.com

As a retired public health statistician, I believe we need to consider gun violence from a public health perspective.

1. "Risks and Benefits of a Gun in the Home" Harvard Injury Control Research Center, 2/10/11
This article summarizes the scientific literature on the health risks and benefits of having a gun in the home for the gun owner and his/ her family. For most contemporary Americans, scientific studies indicate that the health risk of a gun in the home is greater than the benefit. The evidence is overwhelming for the fact that a gun in the home is a risk factor for completed suicide and that gun accidents are most likely to occur in homes with guns. There is compelling evidence that a gun in the home is a risk factor for intimidation and for killing women in their homes. On the benefit side, there are fewer studies, and there is no credible evidence of a deterrent effect of firearms or that a gun in the home reduces the likelihood or severity of injury during an altercation or break-in.
2. "Silencing the Science on Gun Research", Journal of the American Medical Association, 1/25/13, about the NRA's successful effort, starting in 1996, to cut off all funding for research into firearms-related violence. As a public health statistician, I'm appalled at this, but it's easy to understand why the NRA opposes the collection of hard facts on this issue – as the people closest to guns, they are well aware of the damage these weapons can do.

I'm a Quaker, and I wanted to share this perspective.

How can Friends help to prevent future Sandy Hooks?

Quakers are opposed to violence and killing. We are not opposed to gun ownership and hunting. Because guns do kill people, we support efforts to ban assault weapons and high capacity ammunition magazines and limit the number of guns that may be purchased at a time. We support background checks for all gun purchases, though we do not support publicizing names and addresses of registered gun owners. We are not in favor of confiscation of legally owned weapons. We do support buy-backs and other approaches to reducing the number of guns already available. We do not support placing armed guards in schools or training teachers to carry guns.

Our purpose in seeking to control guns and ammunition is not only to reduce the incidence of mass shootings; it is to reduce the number of gun-related deaths from suicides, domestic violence, accidents to children and shootings on our city streets. We support research, at the state and federal level, into all aspects of the epidemiology of gun violence.