

My name is Dr. Rose Mary Chuley, and I am a clinical psychologist in private practice with over 25 years of experience. Therefore, I have first hand knowledge about issues in mental health care and the improvements which can be made. However, I am very distressed that mental health issues are being used to weaken the argument for sane gun control laws.

The need for gun control (specifically the banning of the sale of assault weapons, high capacity magazines, and the closing of loopholes in existing laws) is being deflected onto the call for mental health care professionals to protect society from such tragedies as Newtown. We as mental health professionals cannot with total accuracy predict who will become violent. Even if we could, we do not have the treatments that would definitely prevent such behavior. And even if we did, mandating such treatment raises civil liberties issues. Many big ifs here. Most importantly, the majority of people so inclined never seek treatment to begin with, but can easily act out their violent impulses because of the easy availability of guns. This emphasis on mental illness being the major link to gun related violence further stigmatizes the mentally ill. Most of the people who die each year in gun related violence are not killed by people who carry a diagnosis.

A new wrinkle in this debate is being couched as privacy vs. public safety with the possibility of mental health professionals being mandated to report anyone we feel is potentially violent. There are many problematic issues around this including those of confidentiality, the reluctance of people to then divulge such thoughts, the roles of family members in reporting potential violent behavior, etc. However, a major issue is that even if we did report such an individual, under current laws, that person could still go to a gun show and buy an assault weapon!! What then?

Just think how differently events would have played out if Adam Lanza had entered the school with a knife, or even a revolver. Those people who died trying to disarm him could probably have done so. In addition, he came from a wealthy, educated family who had access to mental health care. And those weapons were registered to his mother, not him so background checks would have made no difference. Again, how different if all she had was a rifle. So, yes, the Newtown tragedy IS about assault weapons.

I do not want my profession to be held responsible for preventing another Newtown. The true responsibility belongs to our elected representatives who must not bow to the pressure of the gun lobby and their campaign of misinformation and manipulation. The mental health profession cannot even point to research supporting our position because the NRA was able to have all government funding for such research barred. Only now may that change with Obama's executive order, but it will take years to compile now. We cannot wait as more lives are lost.

As a citizen of this state and a psychologist working to improve people's lives, I ask that all assault weapons and high capacity magazines be banned from future sales and removed from the state.

Thank you. I would be happy to discuss any of this via email or in person. My phone number is 203 334-2128 and my email is rmgarden87@sbcglobal.net.

Rose Mary Chuley, Ph.D.