

Hello, my name is Patrick Crean. I have been a registered nurse since 2001, specializing in behavioral health. I provide care for acutely ill psychiatric patients. My job is to constantly assess them and evaluate their potential for danger either to themselves or others. Also, I encourage them to maintain their medication regime, which along with group and 1:1 therapy, are the pillars of their inpatient treatment. More than anything else, I want to see my patients succeed after discharge, achieve some level of routine with medication and therapy, and return to their prior optimal level of functionality.

But a major predictor of how any patient will do after discharge is where they go for their follow up care. Even a few years ago there were many programs available that provided inpatient discharge opportunities. They are just not there anymore. The patients that need help the most are the ones that are having a harder time finding discharge to an inpatient facility. And there are far less opportunities for the most gravely ill to find a bed in a long term care psychiatric facility.

This should not come as a surprise to anyone. These facilities and programs have had their budgets steadily eroded and finally had their doors closed to make state budgets more palatable. This has been the direction in Connecticut for years. People with a better understanding of economics than I have determined that this made good financial sense. So be it. But why is anyone surprised when after limiting or eliminating funding for mental health we see an alarming increase in violence from the same people we should have been helping.

Mental illness has borne an extremely unfortunate stigma for years. The simple fact is that anyone of us could be stricken with some form of it during our lives, as easily as we could someday have cancer or heart disease. When was the last time you saw anyone cutting funding for those? We all have a duty to help these people. They are our family, friends, fellow citizens and constituents. We do not have the right to turn our backs on them.

An easy answer is gun control. People that are under educated, or scared, or just looking for a quick response will be very much in favor of it. It gives them comfort and they have no desire to look beyond that. But I can promise you that an extremely mentally ill patient, who has decided to commit violence and has a plan, will not be stopped by any law. They will find a way to act on their urges.

Please reconsider any further gun control laws. They are not even a bandaid in place of a tourniquet. They are a fairy tale told to people that desperately want to believe it will work.

Thank you for your consideration,

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