

Gun violence prevention experts call for more physician involvement

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A new commentary in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* from researchers with The Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research and University of California, Davis, calls for more physician engagement in the current gun policy dialogue.

"Physicians are an important source of information for the public and a valued constituency for policymakers," said lead author Shannon Frattaroli, a faculty member with the Johns Hopkins Center for [Gun Policy](#) and Research at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. "They are uniquely poised to be at the forefront of [gun violence](#) prevention efforts."

Frattaroli, along with co-author Garen Wintemute, an emergency medicine physician at UC Davis Medical Center and the Baker–Teret Chair in [Violence Prevention](#) at UC Davis, outline five strategies for physician engagement on the issue:

- **Physician as Clinician:** The majority of gun violence victims die as a result of suicide. Physicians can work to ensure [mental health treatment](#) is available and support policies that restrict or limit new gun purchases among those at risk.
- **Physicians' Role in Managing Fear:** As fear figures prominently in decisions people make about guns and in [policy debates](#), there's an opportunity for physicians, who are used to helping patients manage fears, to bring those skills to the current conversation on guns.

- **Physician as Researcher:** On Jan. 16, President Obama directed the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) to conduct research into the causes and consequences of gun violence, reversing the agency's 17-year silence on gun violence prevention research. Physicians can help assure that money is appropriated, and contribute to the future research agenda.
- **Physician as Policy Advocate:** As advocates and leaders, physicians can use their collective "raised voices" to influence Congress to consider new policies to prevent deaths from gun violence.
- **Physician as Leader:** Physicians can talk and write about their interactions with patients and colleagues, and lead by example in statehouses and halls of Congress.

"Most people who die from gunshot wounds do so at the shooting site and never make it to the hospital. More or better treatment is unlikely to yield the greatest reductions in gun deaths," Wintemute said.

"Gun violence is a public-health problem requiring a greater emphasis on prevention. Physicians, on behalf of their patients and their communities, can add much to the current policy discussions."

Provided by UC Davis

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