

# Physicians urged to consider gun-related violence in elderly

July 9 2013

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Physicians must consider their role in restricting gun-related violence among the elderly and those with mental illness, according to two ideas and opinions pieces published in the July 9 issue of the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

(HealthDay)—Physicians must consider their role in restricting gun-related violence among the elderly and those with mental illness, according to two ideas and opinions pieces published in the July 9 issue of the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Marshall B. Kapp, J.D., M.P.H., from Florida State University in Tallahassee, discusses the dangers posed to elderly people from the presence of firearms in a home. Many elderly people, including those with [memory impairment](#), have access to firearms, and the elderly are more likely to suffer self-inflicted [gunshot wounds](#). A public health approach to preventing gun violence, which includes physician engagement as a central component, is necessary. Physicians have a legal right to ask about guns, and should examine the risk of gun-related

injury based on the patient's physical and mental state. Action in the form of anticipatory intervention should be encouraged when necessary.

Carl E. Fisher, M.D., and Jeffrey A. Lieberman, M.D., from the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York City, discuss mental illness and gun violence. They note that in the popular press and academic literature people with mental disorders have often been portrayed as a greater part of the problem of gun-related violence than they actually are. Restricting gun access should be implemented appropriately among the subset of people with mental illness who exhibit risk factors for dangerous behavior.

"We urge physicians to thoughtfully consider the facts when discussing the role of mental illness in gun violence, and beyond the issue of [gun violence](#), to advocate for [mental health care](#) as a meaningful goal in itself, putting compassion before fear," Fisher and Lieberman write.

**More information:** [Full Text - Kapp](#)  
[Full Text - Fisher and Lieberman](#)

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