

Locked, loaded and feeling low: Dangers of gun ownership in the elderly

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In the United States the debate around gun ownership often focuses on teenagers; however, research shows that elderly Americans are the most likely to own a gun and that presents both medical and legal problems for physicians and carers.

Writing in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, Dr. Ellen Pinholt explores these issues and proposes a series of 'red flag' questions which caregivers must ask.

While there is no upper age limit on owning a firearm, Americans aged over 65 have the highest prevalence of dementia, depression and suicide. Federal law prohibits mentally incompetent persons from possessing a gun; however, this only applies to a formal finding by a court and not necessarily to a physician's diagnosis of dementia.

Using a series of case studies to explore the medical and legal dimensions of the issue, Dr Pinholt suggests '5 L's', questions about [gun ownership](#) which should be asked as routinely as questions about driving.

If there is a gun present is it Locked? Is it Loaded? Are Little children present? Does the gun owner feel Low? Is the gun owner Learned?

More information: Ellen M. Pinholt, Joshua D. Mitchell, Jane H. Butler, Harjinder Kumar, "Is There a Gun in the Home?" Assessing the Risks of Gun Ownership in Older Adults' *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, [DOI: 10.1111/jgs.12836](https://doi.org/10.1111/jgs.12836)

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