

New research reveals link between mental health and pediatric suicide by firearm

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Robert McLoughlin, MD. Credit: University of Massachusetts Medical School

A new study by UMass Medical School researchers finds hospitals across the United States are seeing a trend in children and young adults being hospitalized as a result of self-inflicted wounds from guns. The research team found that having any mental health disorder was associated with an almost 12 times higher likelihood of having an admission for suicide attempt by firearm. The findings are published in the *Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery*.

"Gun violence has become an epidemic in this country," said Robert McLoughlin, MD, a pediatric surgery research fellow and general

surgery resident.

Dr. McLoughlin worked with pediatric surgeons Jeremy Aidlen, MD, associate professor of surgery; Muriel Cleary, MD, assistant professor of surgery; Michael Hirsh, MD, professor of surgery and pediatrics; and others to analyze a national inpatient database of pediatric hospitalizations for suicides or self-inflicted injury by firearm from 2006, 2009 and 2012. The link between pediatric suicide by firearm and mental health was particularly significant. The research team found that having any [mental health disorder](#) was associated with an almost 12 times higher likelihood of having an admission for [suicide attempt](#) by firearm. Furthermore, it was more than 21 times more likely if there was a diagnosis of depression.

"Our research found 21 times higher odds of children and [young adults](#) being hospitalized for suicide and self-inflicted injury if they suffered from depression. A sensible first step would be to further limit the access of our youth to firearms, especially those with mental illness," McLoughlin said.

Provided by University of Massachusetts Medical School

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