

Study examines the perspectives of recently firearm-injured people on news media reports of firearm violence

January 10 2023



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

News media reports of interpersonal firearm violence on television and in print publications are generally presented through an episodic lens that

focuses on the individual event, as opposed to one that frames the incident within larger social and structural context.

Now, for the first time, new research published in the journal *Social Science and Medicine—Qualitative Research in Health* and led by corresponding author Jessica H. Beard, MD, MPH, FACS, Associate Professor of Surgery in the Division of Trauma and Critical Care and Director of Trauma Research at the Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University, uncovers the impact of this episodic framing on recently firearm-injured people, and explores how they perceive the meaning and impact of news media reporting about their injuries and firearm violence in their communities.

From July-October 2021, Dr. Beard and her research team recruited adult English-speaking patients who attended the outpatient trauma surgery clinic at Temple University Hospital within two months of sustaining a firearm injury (penetrating gunshot wound). Approximately 85 percent of the patients approached during that time agreed to participate in the study. Of the 26 patients who participated:

- Their median age was 27 years old.
- 21 self-identified as male.
- 19 self-identified as Black/African-American, 4 as Latinx/Hispanic, 2 as multiracial/mixed race, 1 as white.
- 16 said they were aware of news coverage about their shooting.
 - Of these, 13 reported TV coverage, 11 social media coverage, 3 newspaper coverage.
- None were interviewed by a journalist about their shooting.

During their interviews with the participants, the research team found that participants who did not "make the news" generally felt relieved. Participants whose shootings made the news described largely negative

viewpoints of the coverage. They identified multiple harms of current media coverage of firearm violence including:

- Feeling dehumanized
- Reliving the trauma
- Frustration when there were inaccuracies
- Perceiving a threat to their personal safety
- Harm to their reputation
- A negative impact on public perceptions of safety and community

One participant described how it felt to be the subject of an episodic report on her shooting: "They didn't ask me any questions. There was no calls made to me or talk to me personally [...] They didn't tell the story from my perspective. It was like she was shot and that's it. I would prefer if they asked me specific feelings about me [...] if they actually interviewed me, yeah, instead of just writing it like I'm a nobody."

Another participant connected episodic reports with fear and firearm purchasing, which spiked in 2021: "You report the gun violence, but why not do a follow-up report [...] for the victims, the survivors, the families that had to bury these people, the whole process? Just don't do a guy got shot over there, a guy got shot over here. You're making people more fearful. You're more fearful, you're going to arm yourself more."

"These interviews reveal the need for journalists to stop episodic snapshot reporting of individual incidents of interpersonal firearm violence and concentrate on producing more in-depth reporting that presents root causes and solutions, and gives voice to those who are directly impacted," said Dr. Beard. "It's time for reporting on firearm violence to be part of the solution," she added.

More information: Jessica H. Beard et al, "Like I'm a nobody:"

firearm-injured peoples' perspectives on news media reporting about firearm violence, *SSM—Qualitative Research in Health* (2022). [DOI: 10.1016/j.ssmqr.2022.100212](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmqr.2022.100212)

Provided by Temple University

Citation: Study examines the perspectives of recently firearm-injured people on news media reports of firearm violence (2023, January 10) retrieved 1 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-01-perspectives-firearm-injured-people-news-media.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.