A new study reveals the economic burden of gun violence

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The researchers tabulated the estimated costs and losses using the hospital cost-to-charge ratio. The estimated cost associated with treatment was $37,602,667. The total payment collected by the hospital was $17,293,655, resulting in a net loss of $20,309,012 over the four years.

"When victims of firearm-related injuries are unable to pay their medical expenses, the hospitals write off unpaid medical bills as medical losses," Dr. Marrero explains. "In this study, Medicaid dominated the payer makeup. This can also result in losses because Medicaid reimbursement does not fully cover costs. Per the American Hospital Association, Medicaid paid hospitals, on average, 90 cents for every dollar spent by hospitals caring for Medicaid patients in 2019. Because taxpayers fund Medicaid as well as Medicare, they bear the economic burden of these firearm injuries."

The authors observe that non-fatal firearm injuries are highest in the South, and Louisiana leads the US in the non-fatal firearm injury rate.

They stress that when examining the financial impact of gun violence, it is important to also consider the costs associated with nonacute care such as follow-up visits, rehabilitation, secondary outpatient surgeries, home health, and durable medical equipment, which increase the total cost exponentially. The authors also point out economic burdens to society beyond medical expenses, including criminal justice expenditures, employer and work-loss costs, as well as intangible losses, such as diminished quality of life.

"The estimated costs presented in this study show only a fraction of the economic burden associated with gun violence," Dr. Marrero concludes. "In actuality, the financial impact of firearm injuries is much greater, and further research is necessary to find solutions for this public health issue."

More information: Christopher E. Marrero et al,

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