


Avoiding Fault Lines:
fostering a culturally humble
approach to discussing firearm injury
prevention

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A **mindful moment** before we begin



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Objectives

1. Review population health lens for firearm injury prevention
2. Identify patients to screen for firearm injury risk
3. Review principles of secure storage and voluntary transfer
4. Real talk on firearm culture with an industry expert
5. Practice screening and counseling

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Shared knowledge is essential to **clear communication**

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Understanding the prevalence of firearm ownership and risk for injury: Conceptualizing Scope

- How many firearms are there in America?
 - 390 Million¹; 4% of the global pop owns 40% of the firearms¹
- What percent of US homes have a firearm?
 - 42% of US homes have a firearm²; 47% of homes in WI
- How many kids live in a home with an unsecured /loaded firearm?
 - >4 million children live in a home with an unsecured firearm³

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Understanding the prevalence of firearm ownership and risk for injury: Conceptualizing Scope

- How many people die annually due to firearms?
 - >40,000 Americans die each year from firearms⁴
 - Firearms are the leading cause of death for Americans ages 1-19⁵

48,204

PEOPLE DIED FROM FIREARMS IN THE U.S.
The second highest total ever recorded.



Someone was killed by a gun every 11 minutes.



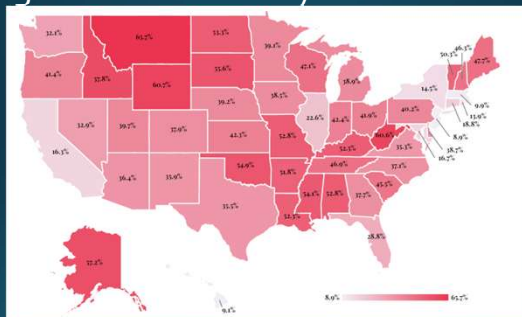
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Understanding the prevalence of firearm ownership and risk for injury: Conceptualizing Scope

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 - Firearms are the leading cause of death for Americans ages 1-19⁵
- What is the main type of death from firearms (e.g. mass shooting, etc)?
 - Suicide 71% in WI, 53% Nationally
 - Mass Casualty <1%

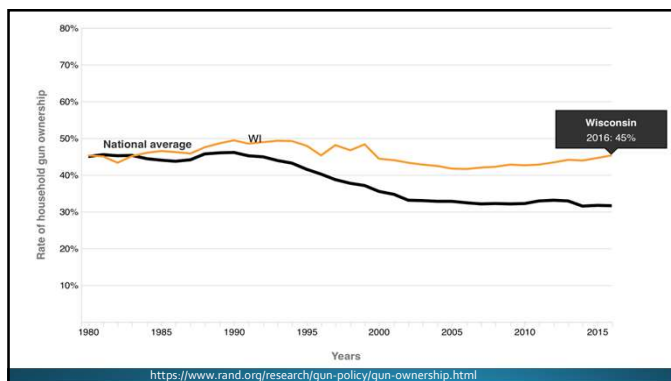
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Registered Firearm by State in the US



<https://wisevoter.com/state-rankings/gun-ownership-by-state/>

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<https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/gun-ownership.html>

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Importance of FSS screening

- over half of all U.S. gun owners **do not** practice secure firearm storage (55% w/ children in home do not secure **all** firearms)¹⁴
- 82% of adolescent firearm suicides involve a **family member's gun**¹⁵
- 80% of school shooters <18 access firearm from **own home or from a relative or friend**¹⁶

Analysis of unintentional firearm deaths among children and adolescents

0-17 years of age in the United States, 2003-2021

Among households with known firearm storage information:

- 56%** of unintentional firearm deaths among children and adolescents happened in **their own home.**
- 74%** of the firearms used were stored **loaded.**
- 76%** of the firearms used were stored **unlocked.**

When stored unloaded, the firearms were most commonly accessed from these locations:

Source: Wilson, E.P., White, D., Shen, J.H., Bui, C.J., Geller, A., & Franks, A.A. (2023). Unintentional firearm deaths among children and adolescents: results of a cross-sectional National Health Interview Survey, United States, 2003-2021. *BMJ Open*, 17(10), 1-10.

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Addressing the Public Health Issue

Research suggests that clinician counseling paired with **provision of a securing device** → secure firearm storage practices in the home

Can we quantify the impact of secure storage?
If **20%** of homes not currently securely storing all firearms → secure storage of all firearms within the home...

- **323** fewer pediatric firearm injuries annually
- prevent **135** pediatric deaths annually

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Are we even allowed to ask about firearms?

- Privacy of Firearm Owners act struck down
- Violated 15th Amendment rights of physicians
- Our language matters



Avoid a political conversation

Avoid discussion on rights
→ focus on responsibility

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If you don't ask, you don't get it...

Mahatma Gandhi

Who should we screen?

- homes with children or adolescents
- those with mental health conditions creating increased risk for suicide
- individuals experiencing interpersonal violence
- patients with dementia
- military veterans
- Individuals with prior firearm injury

Consider screening everyone

universal screening → increase competency

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Mahatma Gandhi

Clinical Vignette

JC is a 45 year old who identifies as a Caucasian cisgender male. He presents for his annual preventive health exam which was postponed due to COVID-19. In addition to routine wellness recommendations, he wishes to discuss increasing stress related to raising his 15 year old son with his ex-wife. He is currently taking sertraline and reports mild anxiety but no significant depression symptoms.

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Mahatma Gandhi

Clinical Vignette

JC is a 45 year old who identifies as a Caucasian cisgender male. He presents for his annual preventive health exam which was postponed due to COVID19. In addition to routine wellness recommendations, he wishes to discuss increasing stress related to raising his 15 year old son with his ex-wife

"Do you own any firearms, and what is the plan to keep them secure?"

"Couple of hunting rifles in the rafters in the basement, no trigger locks. Ammunition is kept separate but not locked up...I guess I need to take care of that."

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Developing tools for discussing firearms



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Developing tools for discussing firearms

Invite discussion about your patient's firearms

- " Many of my patients own firearms for personal protection...I wanted to check in to see if you have any firearms."
- "In our state around half of homes have firearms in them. I wanted to check in..."

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Developing tools for discussing firearms

Learn more about your patient's firearms

- Tell me more about the firearms you own.
- What do you use your firearms for?
- What kind of firearms do you own?
- How often do you use your firearms?

What's the plan to keep your firearms secure?
What's the plan to prevent unauthorized access?

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Developing tools for discussing firearms

Counseling on injury prevention

- Ask about risk for self harm → consider **temporary firearm transfer**
 - Ask about **at risk individuals in home** such as children:
"do your grandkids every come over? Do they ever play hide and seek?"
 - Ask about firearms in homes where children play
make this a **pre play date question**

Children in home with firearm are 3x more likely to die from suicide

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Developing tools for discussing firearms

Ask the important questions...

Have you ever considered what you would do if you did not feel safe with your firearms?

If you ever felt like you might harm yourself with your firearms...do you have someone who could hold them for you?

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Developing tools for discussing firearms

Ask the important questions...

Your AIM = Empowerment

Honor the person they decide how they want to reduce their personal risk

This is not about taking guns away this is about preserving access once the time of crisis passes

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Core principles of secure firearm storage

- Locked
- Unloaded
- Stored separate from ammunition
- Ammunition locked/secured
- Ensure inaccessible to children or other high risk individuals





ALL FIREARMS



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Gabriele Galimberti






// The Ameriguns



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Options for firearm secure storage

A RANGE OF OPTIONS

	<p>CABLE LOCK Price Range: \$25-\$50</p> <p>A cable lock can be used on most firearms, allows for quick access in an emergency and offers security from theft. The cable runs through the barrel or action of firearms to prevent it from being accidentally fired, requiring either a key or combination to remove it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ AFFORDABLE ✓ ACCESSIBLE ✓ EASY TO REMOVE
	<p>GUN CASE Price Range: \$40-\$100</p> <p>For those looking to conceal, protect or legally transport a registered firearm, a gun case is a portable container available in a variety of materials including plastic, fabric or metal. Be sure to lock it with an external device for added security.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ AFFORDABLE ✓ PORTABLE ✓ RESISTS FIRE DAMAGE
	<p>LOCK BOX Price Range: \$25-\$50</p> <p>With integrated locks, storage boxes provide reliable protection for firearms and allow gun owners to legally transport their weapons of their home.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ AFFORDABLE ✓ ACCESSIBLE ✓ PORTABLE
	<p>ELECTRONIC LOCK BOX Price Range: \$50-\$100</p> <p>Electronic lock boxes are an effective way to store or legally transport firearms, and they also prevent theft. Since only the person with the code can access the weapons, these electronic lock boxes are specially designed for quick access to stored firearms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ AFFORDABLE ✓ EASY TO REMOVE ✓ PORTABLE
	<p>FULL SIZE AND BIOMETRIC GUN SAFES Price Range: \$100-\$1000</p> <p>A gun safe provides the ultimate form of concealment and allows owners to safely store multiple firearms in one place. Gun safes of all sizes are now available with biometric options to ensure only verified people have access.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ EASY TO REMOVE ✓ PORTABLE ✓ FIRE RESISTANT

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Consider having securing devices available in **your** clinics

Cable Locks



Trigger Lock



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What if the patient discloses thoughts of **self harm** or **harm to others**

Plan
Means
Intent



- Voluntary transfer of firearm (GunShop project)
- Voluntary mental health hold
- Contact law enforcement
- Involuntary mental health hold

What about ERPO? (extreme risk protection order)

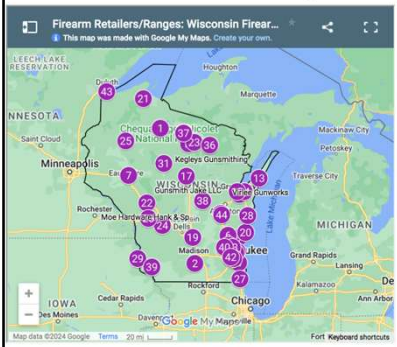
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Gun Shop Project: voluntary temporary transfer



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Firearm Retailers and Ranges



Be there
Wisconsin



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Real Talk...
How's it going?

You don't have to be
anything more than
WHO YOU ARE
RIGHT
NOW

- Mike Rogers



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Shared knowledge
is essential to
clear communication




Michael Sodini,
Founder of Walk the Talk
America

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What is WTTA?



- Founded in 2018 to bridge the gap between gun culture and mental health
- Bill's story was a foundational piece for the purpose of WTTA
- It was founded based on a chance meeting in Louisiana
- Promotes early mental health intervention, education, and reducing stigma
- Provides tools and resources that respect both mental health and Second Amendment rights

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Why WTTA Was Created



- Walk the Talk America is rooted in educating the various sides of guns and mental health.
- Tragedies involving firearms are often politicized instead of humanized
- Realized no organization was focusing on collaboration over conflict

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Common Stereotypes of Gun Owners

Car Culture	vs.	Gun Culture
+ FUNCTIONAL (DRIVING)		+ FUNCTIONAL (SELF-DEFENSE)
+ COLLECTING		+ COLLECTING
+ HOBBY (OFF-ROADING/RACING)		+ HOBBY (HUNTING)
+ CUSTOMIZING		+ CUSTOMIZING
- CARS CAN BE DEADLY		- GUNS CAN BE DEADLY

LET'S END THE STIGMA AGAINST GUN-OWNERS AND SEEKING MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT.
WTTA

Misconceptions: angry, paranoid, political extremists

Reality: Parents, professionals, veterans, survivors, sport shooters

Gun culture = values like independence, responsibility, and protection

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What Gun Owners Value

- Safety and protection of loved ones
- The ability to provide for their family in a career that utilizes firearms
- Self-reliance and control over personal safety
- Community, identity, and recreation

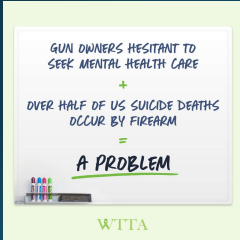
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Common Missteps by Mental Health Professionals

- Using charged or political language (e.g., "gun problem," "gun violence")
- Assuming ownership = danger or instability
- Pushing for removal without context or trust, shooting can be one of their greatest stress reducers
- Not acknowledging the value or meaning of firearms to the patient

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What Gun Owners Want from Mental Health



- Confidentiality and respect for their lifestyle
- Practical solutions, not fear-based responses
 - Advising to separate ammunition from the firearms is not practical advice as majority of gun owners have a firearm for home protection where they believe "every second counts"
- Clinicians who understand secure storage options and comfortable talking about firearms

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How to Talk About Guns Naturally



- Ask about firearms like any other risk factor — respectfully
- Learn about different types of firearm storage
- Explore the Mental Health Plan *with* the client, not *for* them
- Use curiosity, not confrontation

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WTTA Tools You Can Use

- Mental Health Screening Tool (anonymous, no tracking)
- Cultural competence courses
- Gun-friendly clinician directory
- Free resources for gun shops and ranges



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Continue Learning

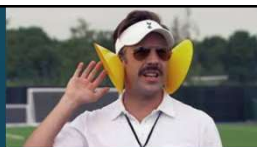


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Practice Cases:
Set a respectful tone
Remember your language matters
Explain your reason for asking
Focus on injury prevention

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These are the **3 things** for which I am listening



- Firearm and ammo secured / not accessible to unauthorized person
- Individual is trained on firearm use/ has maintained their skills
- Plan for voluntary temporary transfer in event of mental health crisis

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Practice Cases:

Case 1: patient expresses suicidal ideation

Clinical Pearls

- Ask about plan to end life
- Inquire about means to act on plan
- If no intent to act on plan, encourage voluntary transfer to family, friend, gun shop or local police
- If intent to act on plan, emergency detention

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Practice Cases:

Case 2: parent of small children, lives in home with partner who owns firearms

Clinical Pearls

- Firearm in home ↑ risk for death/injury for children
- 4+ million kids live in a home with loaded, unsecured firearm
- Firearms should be secured, not just hidden
- Simply telling children not to touch firearm is insufficient

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Practice Cases:

Case 3: patient is military veteran

Clinical Pearls

- Respect expertise of patient // Be mindful of language
- Clearly explain why you are asking (studies show vets are receptive when they understand why questions are being asked)
- Make sure to check in on all firearms; be prepared to discuss safe staging
- Consider if you want to enter info into EHR

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Practice Cases:

Case 4: Intimate partner violence survivor, lives in dangerous environment

How you do handle this / what's your take?

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One last mindful moment as we close



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Resources for further Study

AMERICAN FAMILY PHYSICIAN

Bigham J, Stiles M, Giacobassi M. Firearm injury prevention: practical office tips. *Am Fam Physician*. 2024 (in press).



Clinical Approaches to the Prevention of Firearm-Related Injury



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Resources for further Study


 Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Coursera
 "Reducing Gun Violence in America: Evidence for Change"
 


 The Bulletpoints Project (<https://www.bulletpointsproject.org/>)


 Gun Violence Prevention Learning Collaborative
 

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Resources for further Study


 INSTITUTE FOR FIREARM INJURY PREVENTION
 UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
 


 Firearm Injury Prevention Among Children & Teens
 Massive Open Online Course



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Thank you

Reach out with any ideas or questions as they arise
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