

Gun Violence Among Youth and the Pediatric Healthcare Provider Role



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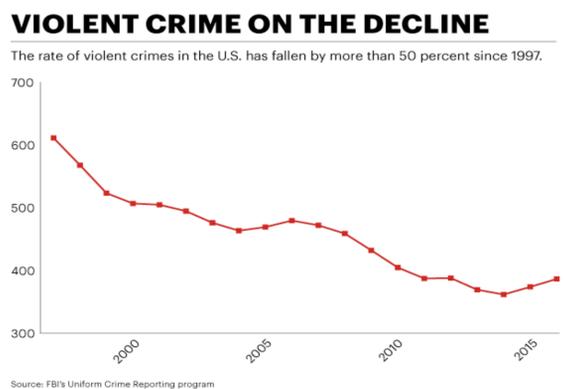
Youth Violence

- 310 million guns in the United States
- In 2014, 4,300 youth between the ages of 10 to 24 were victims of homicide- an average of 12 each day.
- Among those 86% (3,703) were male and 14% (597) were female.
- Among 10 to 24 year olds, homicide is the leading cause of death for African Americans.
- Second leading cause of death for Hispanics.
- Third leading cause of death among Native Americans and Alaska Natives.

National Survey Results

- In a 2015 sample of youth grades 9-12: 22% reported being in a physical fight in the past 12 months; 16% reported carrying a weapon on one or more days in the 30 days prior to the survey; 5.3% reported carrying a gun on one or more days.
- 5.6% did not go to school on one or more days in the past 30 days because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school.
- 6% reported being threatened or injured with a weapon (gun, knife, or club) on school property within the past 12 months.

Violent Crime Data



There has been a persistent decline in gun ownership over the past three decades. In addition, the overall violent crime rate has been decreasing. Nonetheless, the number of homicides in the largest U.S. cities increased by nearly 17% last year, which is the greatest increase lethal violence in over a quarter century. In Chicago, the percentage of youth age 15 to 24 years of age who have been victims of homicide has increased from 29% in 1975 to 44% in 2014. Although there is no single reason for the rise in violence, evidence indicates that the availability of guns is a main factor in the lethality of violent acts.

Healthcare Provider Role

- Encourage safe firearm practices by encouraging parents to remove guns from the home or at a minimum to keep guns unloaded and safely locked up.
- Advise parents to limit television viewing and other media such as video games that tend to romanticize the use of firearms as a way to resolve conflicts.
- Be aware of local community resources that can provide further guidelines to families, who are at risk of firearm-related injury and violence.
- Support efforts to enact common-sense firearm legislation, including stronger background checks, banning assault weapons, addressing firearm trafficking, and encouraging safe firearm storage.
- Encourage funding for gun violence prevention research and continued funding for the National Violent Death Reporting System to all 50 states.
- Provide anticipatory guidance to families about the health hazards of firearms.
- Ensure children and their families have access to mental health services, especially to address the effects of exposure to violence.

Conclusion

The increase in homicides in our nation's major cities is a public health issue. Healthcare providers can advocate for their patients by identifying families who may need extra support to help children who are at risk due to exposure to violence. In addition, while emotional and behavioral problems do not directly cause violence in youth, children with ADHD, oppositional defiant disorder, and depression should be diagnosed as early as possible in order to foster positive peer relationships and learn appropriate social skills to decrease the risk of acting impulsively or aggressively in challenging social situations. Happy childhoods last a life time; children need to feel supported, encouraged and safe in their communities to achieve their full potential.

References

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