Medical Students, Residents, and Fellowship Trainees:

Pediatricians see the devastating effects of firearms firsthand in the form of suicides and homicides, and by treating those who have been exposed to gun violence at school, in the community or at home. As child health providers, we can play an instrumental role in working to prevent these types of injuries.

September is National Suicide Prevention Month. Suicide is the tenth-leading cause of death for all ages in the U.S. and the third-leading cause of death among people between the ages of 15 and 24 years old. Suicide is often an impulsive act, not a long-planned deed. Approximately 85% of suicide attempts with a firearm end in death. More than 75% of the guns used in suicide attempts and unintentional injuries of people under the age of 19-years-old were stored in the residence of the victim, a relative, or a friend. Due it’s particularly important for physicians caring for children to be aware of the facts and statistics pertaining to children, firearms, and suicide. Pediatricians have the perspective, expertise and understanding to advocate and educate to keep children safe from firearms

This PAVE update provides resources about suicide prevention from Yale Child Study Center Child and Adolescent psychiatry fellow and American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) Medical Students and Residents Committee member Dr. Anita Chu. AACAP is dedicated to treating and improving the quality of life for children, adolescents and families affected by mental illness.

SUICIDE PREVENTION AND FIREARM

By: Anita Chu, MD
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Medical Students and Residents Committee of AACAP
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September is National Suicide Prevention Month. Suicide is the tenth-leading cause of death for all ages in the U.S. and the third-leading cause of death among people between the ages of 15- and 24-years-old. Suicide is often an impulsive act, not a long-planned deed. Empirical evidence suggests that people who commit suicide often act in a moment of brief but heightened vulnerability. Guns are the most lethal method of suicide, even though they are not the most common method by which people attempt suicide. Approximately 85% of suicide attempts with a firearm end in death. (Drug overdose, the most widely used method in suicide attempts, is fatal in less than 3% of cases.) More than 75% of the guns used in suicide attempts and unintentional injuries of people under the age of 19-years-old were stored in the residence
of the victim, a relative, or a friend. Guns are a part of life for many of our pediatric patients. One third of all homes contain guns. And many young people are exposed to guns and gun-related violence in their communities. For these reasons, it’s particularly important for physicians caring for children to be aware of the facts and statistics pertaining to children and guns. The following information may be helpful when counseling patient about firearms:

- Gun ownership varies across the country. The five states with the highest incidence of gun owners are Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, South Dakota, and West Virginia. States with a below median incidence of gun owners are Delaware, Florida, California, and Maryland.
- Death rates due to guns also varies across the country. According to the Violence Policy Center, the five states with the highest per capita gun death rates in 2011 were Louisiana, Mississippi, Alaska, Wyoming, and Montana. The state with the lowest gun death rate is Rhode Island, followed by Hawaii, Massachusetts, New York, and New Jersey.
- Gun ownership increases the risk of gun-related death and injury in the family. Research demonstrates that keeping a gun in the house raises the risk nearly three-fold of being shot by a family member or intimate acquaintance.
- People under the age of 25-years-old account for approximately 16% of all suicides.
- Suicide is the second-leading cause of death for college-age youth, as well as people between the ages of 14- and 19-years-old in many states.
- Over three million people between the ages of 12- and 17-years-old seriously considered suicide in the U.S. each year of that number, over one million attempted suicide.
- More people in this country kill themselves with guns than with all other means combined, including hanging, poisoning or overdose, jumping, or cutting.
- Guns are the most lethal method of suicide, even though they are not the most common method by which people attempt suicide. Approximately 85% of suicide attempts with a firearm end in death. (Drug overdose, the most widely used method in suicide attempts, is fatal in less than 3% of cases)
- Nine out of ten people who attempt suicide and survive do not go on to eventually die by suicide.
- Informal contacts outside the channels of mental health care are an important safety net and may potentially be lifesaving for people thinking about suicide.
- Physicians should ask people who seem troubled: "Are there guns in your home?"
- Bringing up the issue of suicide and gun access or ownership does not increase the risk of suicide and could be the critical conversation that saves a young person’s life.

For more information on children and firearms, please visit the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry’s online resource, Facts for Families:
ADVOCATE FOR FIREARM VIOLENCE PREVENTION IN MINUTES

For the September edition of ADVOCATE FOR FIREARM VIOLENCE PREVENTION IN MINUTES, we ask you to learn more about suicide prevention by:

1. Listen to the HealthyChildren.org Sound Advice on Anxiety and Depression [here](http://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/Facts_for_Families_Pages/Teen_Suicide_10.aspx).
2. Share your newfound knowledge with your colleagues, counsel patient about suicide, and enact the suggestions in your practice.

Please write to us (Christian.pulcini@gmail.com) so we can highlight your efforts in the next advocacy email, or if you have any questions and/or suggestions! Thank you for all you do for kids!

PAVE PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

The success of any advocacy campaign comes from grassroots support and efforts. The work happening in clinics, communities, residency programs, and medical schools across the country is impressive and appreciated. We want to know what is going on at your school and program! In an effort to share ideas, we will be placing the “spotlight” on a different project each month.

The September spotlight goes to District III’s St. Christopher’s Hospital for Children in Philadelphia.
The pediatric residents at St. Christopher’s Hospital for Children have put together a ‘PAVE the way against firearm injury’ flyer in the form of a menu (see images below). This was used to advertise the various ways we can advocate against firearm injuries. Residents have also written blogs in the Inquirer regarding ASK day, this can be found at: 
SOCIAL MEDIA ADVOCACY FOR FIREARM INJURY PREVENTION

Use social media for advocacy by engaging with the AAP SOMRFT on Twitter and Facebook. We continue to remember and honor those affected by gun violence, and raise awareness about the public health issue of firearm injury in social media.

We need your help: follow us, like us, tweet or post what is happening at your programs, and retweet or repost our social media advocacy efforts. Follow and use #PAVE #KeepKidsSafe #PutKids1st in messages about firearm injury. To raise awareness that approximately seven young people die each day from gun violence, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, change your profile pic to the PAVE logo on the 7th of each month.

POETRY FOR PREVENTION

We will continue to feature a poetry piece in each of our monthly PAVE advocacy updates, share pieces on SOMRFT’s social media accounts, and among other platforms showcase submissions our website. Our September Poetry for Prevention was submitted by Dr. Mazin Alhamdani after August’s PAVE update which focused on the Florida ruling relating to restriction on physician counseling about firearm safety.

We are accepting submissions for poems written by you, pediatricians in training. The poem must have a firearm injury or gun violence prevention focus, but is otherwise open to your own creativity. Feel free to submit a poem in any format and creativity is encouraged: free verse, haiku, limerick (appropriate for pediatric advocate audiences of course), sonnet, etc. Please send your entries to PAVE Tri-Chair, Lisa Costello at costello.lisa@gmail.com

    September Poetry for Prevention:
    I am fully aware about the right to bare arms,
    but what about the right to prevent harm?

    When I ask a parent "do you own a gun?"
    I am only trying to protect precious daughters and sons.

    Its a shame to allow tragedies to occur when they were not intended.
    Especially when there was a way that that they could have easily been prevented.

    Every child in the world deserves unlimited protection.
    And the children of Florida, will never be an exception.

    Dr. Mazin Alhamdani
    PGY3 pediatric resident
    New York Methodist Hospital
    Brooklyn, NY 11215
WHAT WE'RE READING, TWEETING, & WATCHING

- **Brady Campaign (@bradybuzz)** 9/10/14, 11:47 AM Nearly 50% youth suicides involve a gun—most belonging to a family member. Learn more at [suicideproof.org](https://www.suicideproof.org) #NSPW pic.twitter.com/E80aoX8o8K
- **AAP SOMSRFT (@AAPSOMSRFT)** 9/10/14, 10:04 AM DYK - The risk of suicide is 5x greater if a gun is kept in the home? #PAVE goo.gl/W6VICq #suicideprevention
- In this [video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=video), Dr. David Schonfeld offers insight on the role pediatricians play in helping to prevent gun violence in children's lives. David Schonfeld, MD, FAAP, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is the Director of the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement, the Pediatrician-in-Chief at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children, and a member of the AAP's Disaster Preparedness Advisory Council.

Bringing up the issue of suicide and gun access or ownership does not increase the risk of suicide and could be the critical conversation that saves a young person’s life. Pediatricians remain undeterred in our efforts to keep children safe, we encourage you to join and/or continue our efforts to PAVE the way to firearm injury prevention.

#Forkids

Pediatricians Against Violence Everywhere Advocacy Team

Thanks:
Thank you Anita Chu, MD for providing excellent resources to help us prevent suicide.

Thank you Dr. Mazin Alhamdani for a timely and creative poetry for prevention submission.