EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PS#86 – Firearm Injury Prevention

The topic of firearm injury prevention was one of three included on the 2013 annual Omnibus Periodic Survey of Fellows (PS#86). The Omnibus survey was initiated to address emergent issues as identified by the AAP Board of Directors to support the AAP Strategic Plan. The Firearm Injury Prevention questions addressed pediatricians’ attitudes and practices regarding counseling on firearm injury prevention as well as attitudes towards firearm-related legislation.

Most of the questions on this survey replicate questions from previous Periodic Surveys, allowing us to track trends across time. Previous surveys include: PS#3, 1988 (N=998; response rate=77.6%; pediatricians providing patient care=575); PS#25, 1994 (N=1622; response=68.9; provide patient care=982); PS#47, 2000 (N=1616; response=62.4%; provide patient care=922); and PS#73, 2008 (N=1642; response=54.6%; provide patient care=853).

PS#86 was an eight-page self-administered questionnaire sent to 1,624 nonretired U.S. members of the AAP, August 2013 to January 2014; response to the survey was 44.2% (698 respondents, including pediatric residents). Analysis for this report is limited to pediatricians who provide patient care (654 respondents).

Firearm Injury Prevention Counseling Practices:

- In 2013, 20% of pediatricians say they “always” identify families who have firearms in the home and 53% “sometimes” do so. More than half (53%) report they “always” recommend to families who have firearms the unloading and locking away of guns and 21% “sometimes” do so. About 15% each say they “always” and 30% each say they “sometimes” recommend removal of handguns and firearms from the home. Only 20% “always” and 35% “sometimes” counsel families to inquire about the presence of guns in homes where children spend time.

- In 2013, the primary reason given by pediatricians for not always identifying families with firearms or counseling their removal from homes is not enough time in health supervision visits to address firearm issues (49% so reporting).

Experiences Treating Gun Injuries:

- In 2013, 2008 vs 2013: More pediatricians in 2013 “always” identify families who have guns in the home (16.5% vs 21.3%, p<.05) and counsel families to ask about guns in homes where children spend time (13.4% vs 20.3%, p<.01).

- In 2013, 2008 vs. 2013: The primary method of identifying families with firearms in the home is similar across survey years, with 44% in each year reporting they verbally inquire (without use of a questionnaire or checklist).

- In 2013, 2008 vs. 2013: The proportion of pediatricians who report they or their staff distribute or make available written materials on firearm injury prevention has increased over time (13.0% vs. 17.4%, p<.05). Similarly, the percent of pediatricians who make these materials available to all patients has also increased (35.9% vs. 66.1%, p<.001).

- In 2013, the primary reason given by pediatricians for not always identifying families with firearms or counseling their removal from homes is not enough time in health supervision visits to address firearm issues (49% so reporting).

2008 vs 2013: More pediatricians in 2013 than in 2008 report having treated or consulted on children with injuries caused by guns during the past 12 months (11.5% vs. 15.2%, p<.05).

2008 vs 2013: Among those who have not treated gun injuries during the past 12 months, 37% in 2013 compared to 30.7% in 2008 say they have treated or consulted on gun injuries at some time during their career.

Not for citation or quotation without permission
Attitudes Toward Counseling on Firearm Injury Prevention (% Strongly Agree/Agree):

- In 2013, most pediatricians say they are comfortable discussing firearm injury prevention (70%) and 39% feel they have had adequate training in the area of firearm injury prevention, while only 20% say there is sufficient time in health maintenance visits to address firearm injury prevention issues; 24% are confident in their ability to manage patients with injuries caused by guns. More than half (55%) say that gun violence is a problem in their practice community and 36% say parents resent the intrusion of being asked about firearms in the home.

  - 2008 vs. 2013: The proportion of pediatricians who feel they have adequate professional training in firearm injury prevention has increased from 31% in 2008 to 39% in 2013, p<.01. An increase has also been shown in those reporting confidence in their ability to manage patients with injuries caused by guns (20% vs 24%, p<.05). No differences between years were found for other attitudes toward firearm injury prevention counseling.

- 2008 vs. 2013: Fewer pediatricians in 2013 than in 2008 think they should ask all families about the presence of firearms, specifically handguns, in the home (85.9% vs.79.3%, p<.01) and parents who have handguns to remove them from their home (56.9% vs. 39.5%, p<.001). There was no difference between years in proportion of pediatricians who think they should ask parents who have firearms to unload and lock them away (95.1%, 94.5%).

- 2008 vs. 2013: Fewer pediatricians in 2013 than in 2008 think violence prevention should be a priority issue for pediatricians (91.3% vs 87.8%, p<.05), gun control legislation will help to reduce risks of injury or death (79.6% vs. 74.4%, p<.05), and anticipatory guidance on firearm injury prevention provided by pediatricians will help reduce risks if injury or death (80.3% vs. 70.7%, p<.001).

- 2008 vs. 2013: Pediatricians’ support for legislation restricting the possession or sale of handguns has decreased from 82.6% in 2008 to 75.0% in 2013; support for banning the sale and possession of handguns has also decreased (60.2% vs. 49.3%) (both p<.001). However, support for community efforts to enact legislation holding gun owners responsible for child and adolescent use of guns remains high across survey years (91.6%, 90.6%).

- In 2013, nearly all pediatricians agree they should support community efforts to enact legislation requiring safe storage of all guns (95%), universal background checks (92%), and firearms be subject to consumer product regulations regarding child access, safety and design (88%). Eight out of ten pediatricians agree with efforts to enact legislation banning the sale and possession of high capacity magazines (84%) and assault weapons (82%).