

# The Gun Talk

How to have effective conversations with patients and families about firearms

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# Disclosures



- No payments or gifts from pharma, industry, or other ACCME-defined commercial interests since 2007
- Part of my time is funded by US DHS Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships
- I receive payments from government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and non-healthcare businesses for consultation, training, and expert witness work. **In the past, this has included firearm dealers.**
- I neither donate to nor receive payments or gifts from pro or anti firearm “advocacy” organizations but I am actively involved in AFFIRM which promotes objective research on firearm injury prevention.

**Teacher: Write a sentence with the word "father"**

My father  
is a gun-safety  
guy.

# Key points

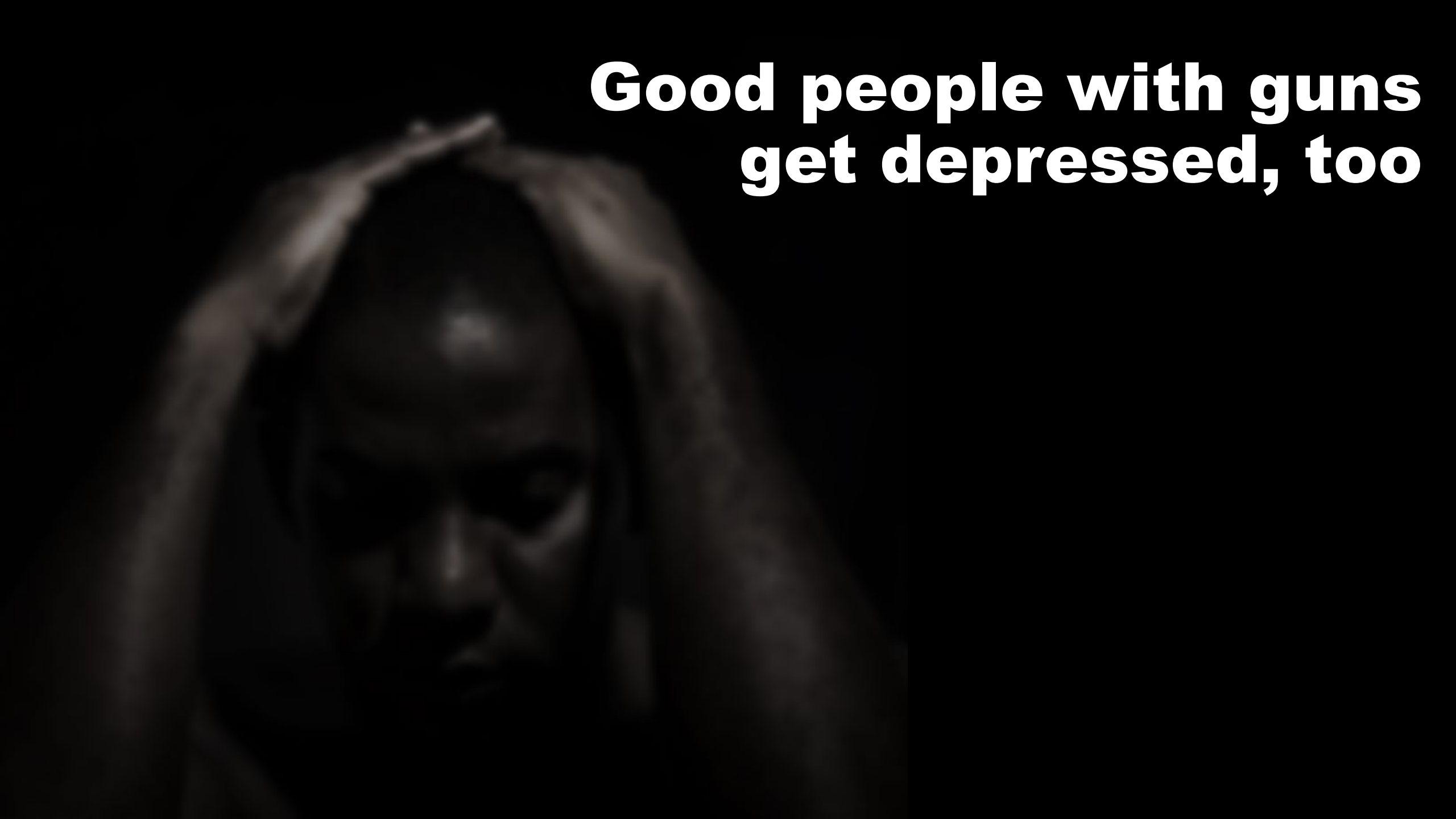
- Safer storage reduces the risk of firearm suicide and accidental shootings / negligent discharges
- Limited options for involuntary removal → we need to focus on collaborative interventions
- Cross cultural problem with a motivational interviewing solution



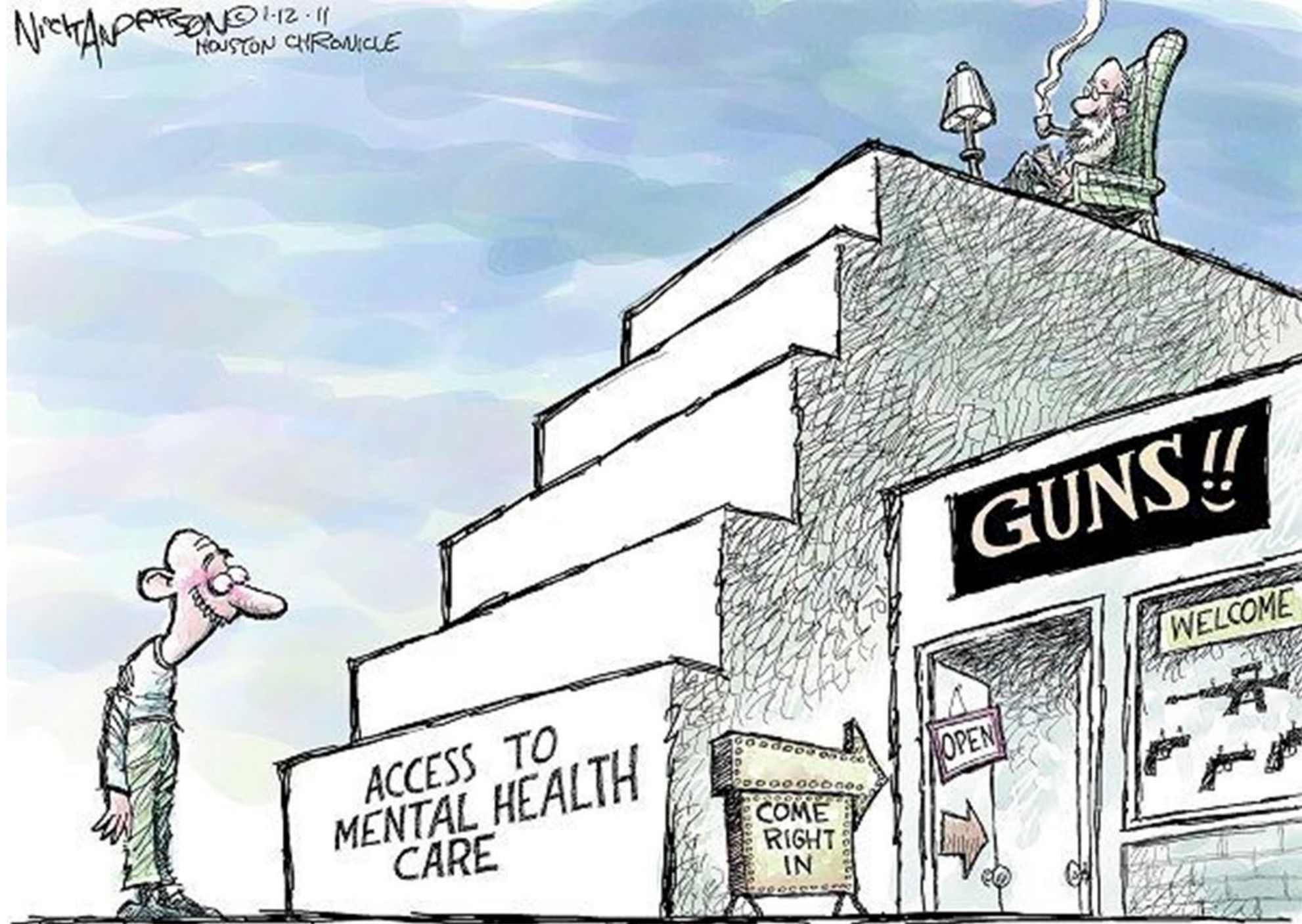
# Firearms Essentials



**Good people with guns  
get depressed, too**



NICH ANDERSON © 1-12-11  
HOUSTON CHRONICLE



# >>393,000,000

## **civilian-owned firearms in USA (Karp/SAS, 2018)**

- |                       |                  |                     |
|-----------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| 2. India              | 15. Iraq         | 28. Argentina       |
| 3. China              | 16. Nigeria      | 29. Angola          |
| 4. Pakistan           | 17. Venezuela    | 30. Sudan           |
| 5. Russian Federation | 18. Iran         | 31. England & Wales |
| 6. Brazil             | 19. Saudi Arabia | 32. Serbia          |
| 7. Mexico             | 20. South Africa | 33. Austria         |
| 8. Germany            | 21. Colombia     | 34. Switzerland     |
| 9. Yemen              | 22. Ukraine      | 35. Sweden          |
| 10. Turkey            | 23. Afghanistan  | 36. Ghana           |
| 11. France            | 24. Egypt        | 37. Chile           |
| 12. Canada            | 25. Philippines  | 38. Portugal        |
| 13. Thailand          | 26. Australia    | 39. Guatemala       |
| 14. Italy             | 27. Spain        | 40. Lebanon         |



# Impact of firearm violence

103k + 140w, 61 incidents

666k + 2787w, 690 incidents

537

549

20,958

**26,328**

130,000\*\*\*

2021 Mass shooting deaths + injuries (FBI/ALERRT)

2021 Mass shooting deaths + injuries (GVA)

2021 Police shooting deaths (CDC)

2021 Accidental shooting deaths (CDC)

2021 Firearm homicides (CDC)

**2021 Firearm suicides (CDC)**

2017 Nonfatal Firearm Injuries (CDC)

**Know your target  
and what's behind it  
before pulling the  
trigger.**

**Suicide?  
Homicide?  
Accidental?  
Mass shooting?**





# Idaho Firearm Injuries & Deaths

- 2010-2019: Below average gun deaths compared to other states but above average suicide rate
- \$2B/year in costs for gun violence
- 87% of gun deaths are suicides and 60% of suicide deaths are due to firearms
- 75% of IPV femicides used a gun
- Crime guns – mostly from Idaho, average TTC 6 years

# Second Amendment, 1791

*A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed*

- DC v Heller, 2008 (It's an individual right)
- McDonald v Chicago, 2010 (States follow federal std)
- NYSRPA v Bruen, 2022 ("Historical context" test for 2A)



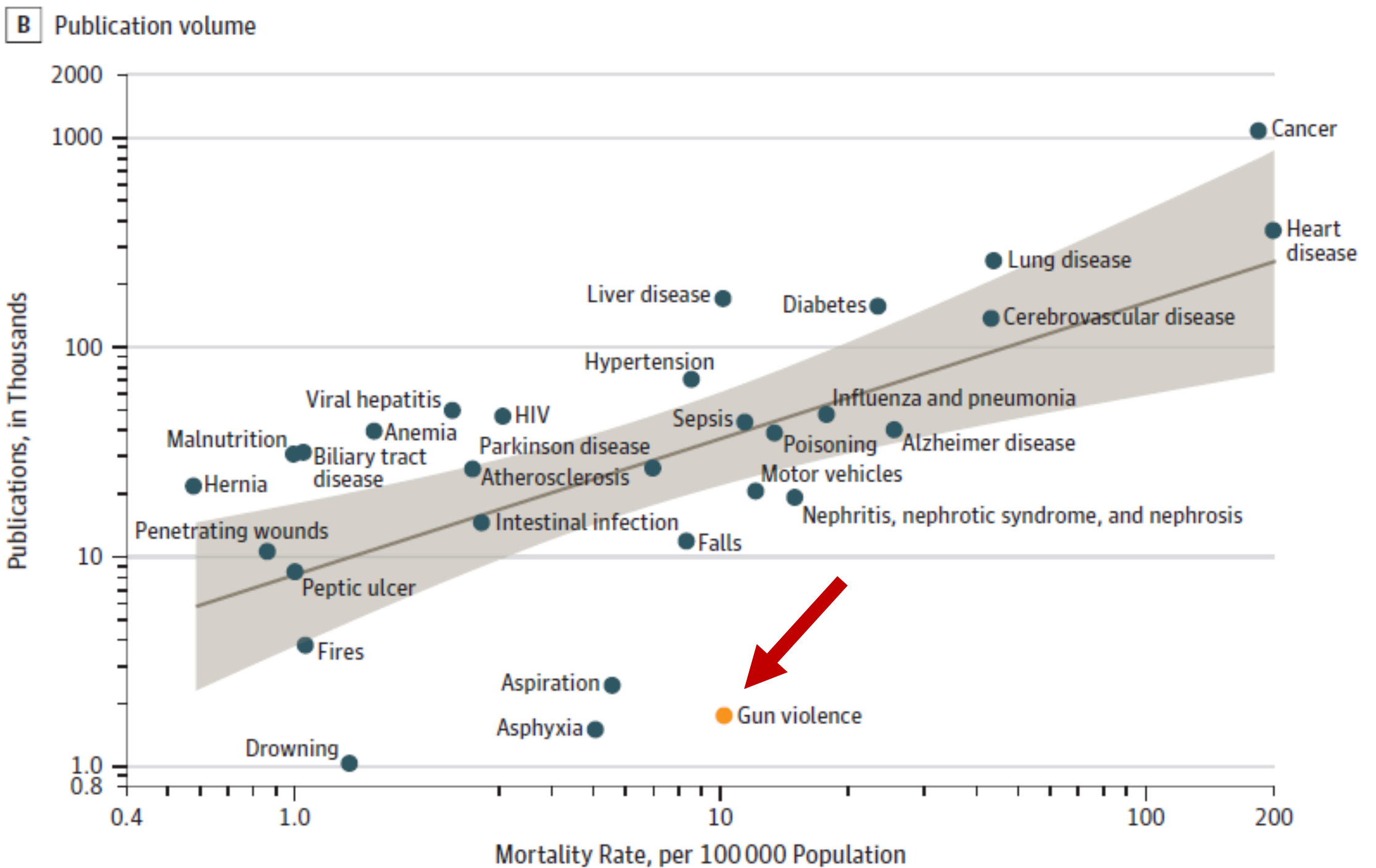
# Idaho Laws

- No permit to purchase or carry (open or concealed)
- No Extreme Risk Protection Order
- No safe storage requirements
- Required reporting of disqualifying MH information
- Everytown “#48 in the country for gun law strength”



# The Science of Firearm Injury Prevention







# Gun Policy in AMERICA



# **Suicide**

(Science of Gun Policy, 2020 Update)

- **May decrease:** Child Access Prevention Laws, Licensing/P2P, Minimum Age Requirements, Waiting Periods
- **Inconclusive:** BGC, Low-Quality Handguns, Concealed-Carry Laws, Extreme Risk Protection Orders, Prohibitions Associated with Domestic Violence, Prohibitions Associated with Mental Illness, Stand-Your-Ground Laws
- **NSMC:** Bans on ASW/HCM sales, Training Requirements, Firearm Sales Reporting/Recording/Registration Requirements, Gun-Free Zones, Laws Allowing Armed Staff in K–12 Schools, Lost or Stolen Firearm Reporting Requirements, Surrender of Firearms by Prohibited Possessors

# Polydisasters, Syndemics, and the 2020 effect



# GUNS

## WE BUY GUNS

Single Gun or Entire Collection

## KNIVES • COLLECTIBLE



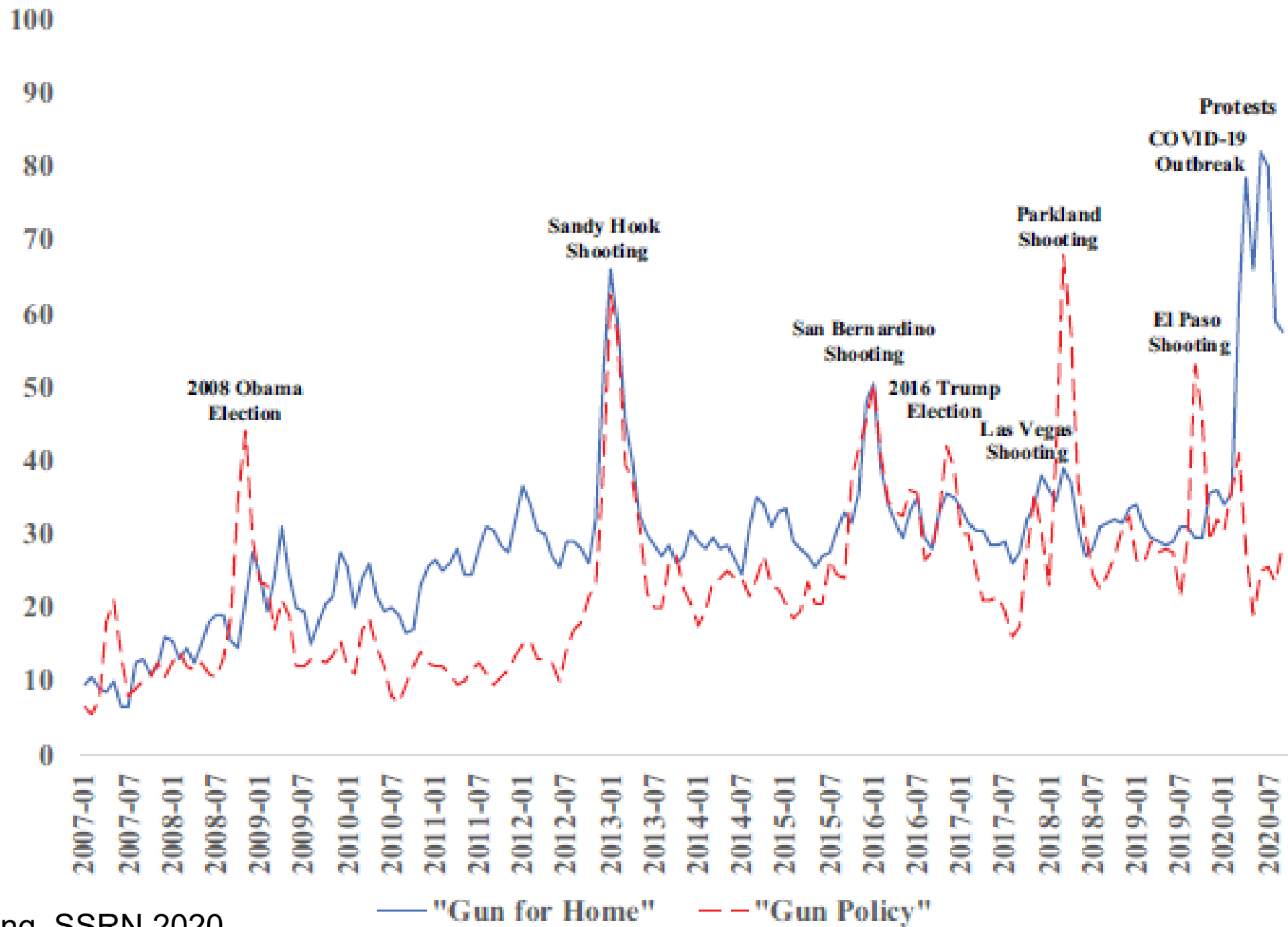
# More nurses becoming first-time gun buyers says St. Louis firearm safety instructor

"And we've seen a lot of first-time (gun owners) and people who have no experience with a firearm."



**BRIAN KELLY**

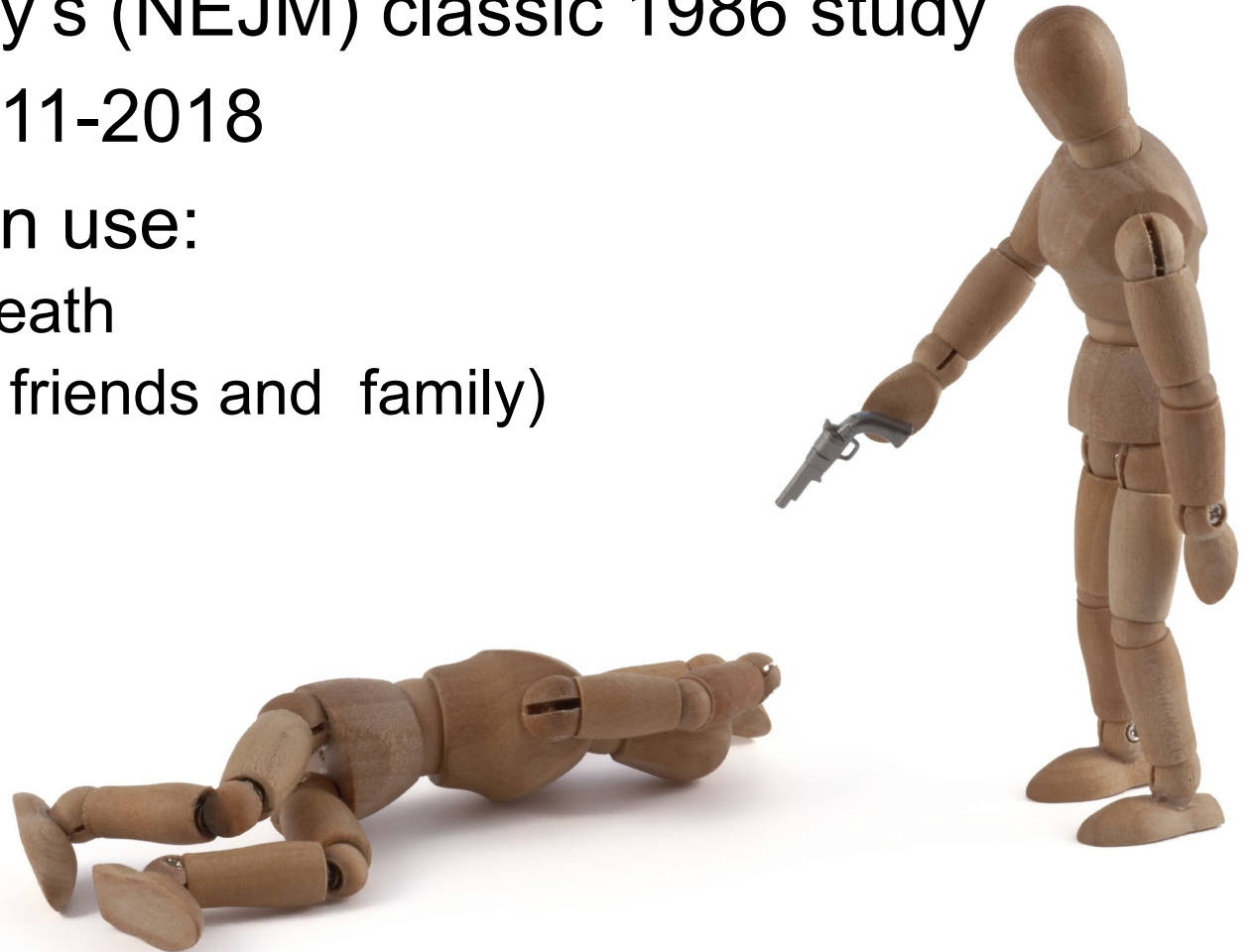
MAY 26, 2020 - 12:25 PM



# Who gets killed by a firearm in the home

(Butler et al JAMA IM 2020)

- Updating Kellerman and Reay's (NEJM) classic 1986 study
- King County, Washington: 2011-2018
- For every lethal defensive gun use:
  - 1.5 accidental/undetermined death
  - 7.9 criminal homicides (mostly friends and family)
  - 48 suicides

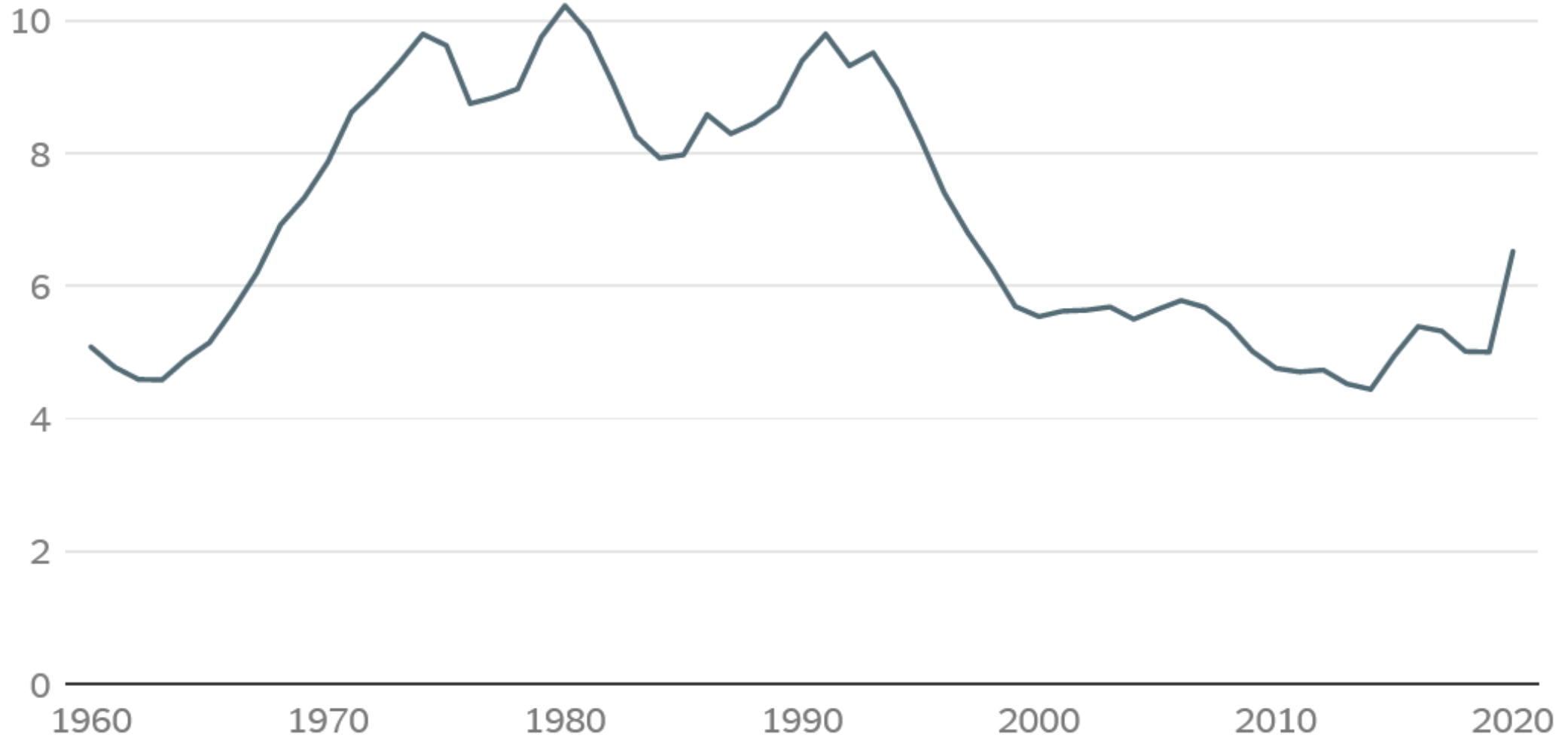


# **New handguns in the home increase suicide risk** (Studdert et al NEJM 2020)

- **100x increased suicide risk in first month of ownership**
- Male handgun owners 3.4x as likely to kill themselves if they own a handgun because they have a 7.8x increased risk of firearm suicide
- Female handgun owners 7.1x as likely to kill themselves if they own a handgun because they have a 35x increased risk of firearm suicide
- **“Handgun owners did not have higher rates of suicide by other methods or higher all cause mortality.”**
- 48% of the suicides were within one year of purchase

# The U.S. Murder Rate, 1960 to 2020

Murders per 100,000 people.



Source: F.B.I.; 2020 estimate, NYT • By The New York Times



# 6,542

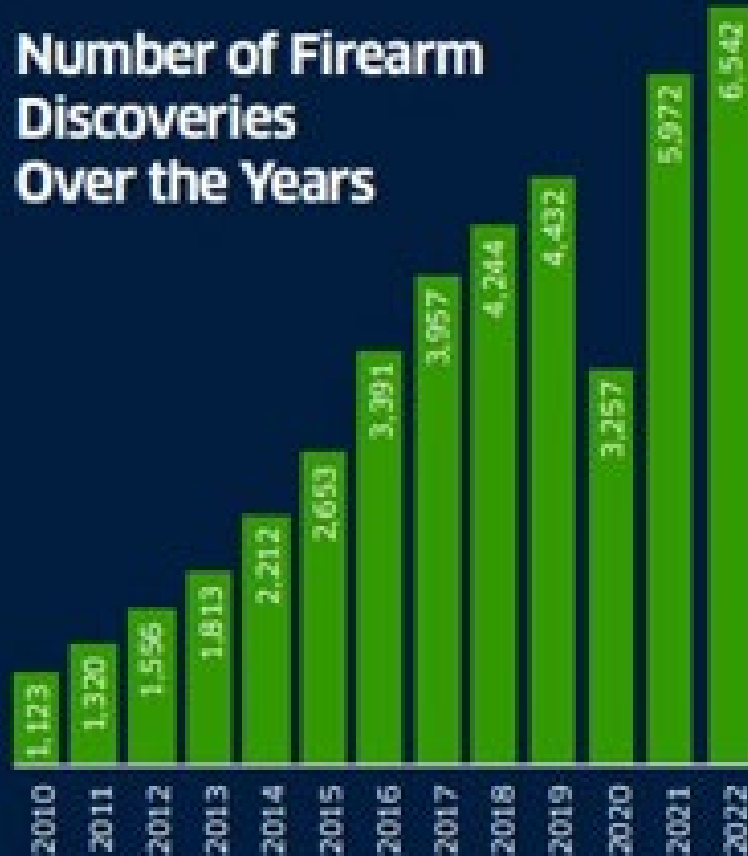
firearms discovered  
in carry-on bags



airports with  
firearm discoveries

# 262

## Number of Firearm Discoveries Over the Years



## Top 10 Airports for Firearm Discoveries



# 88%

loaded

# What We Can Do



**Guns are easy to get  
and difficult to remove**



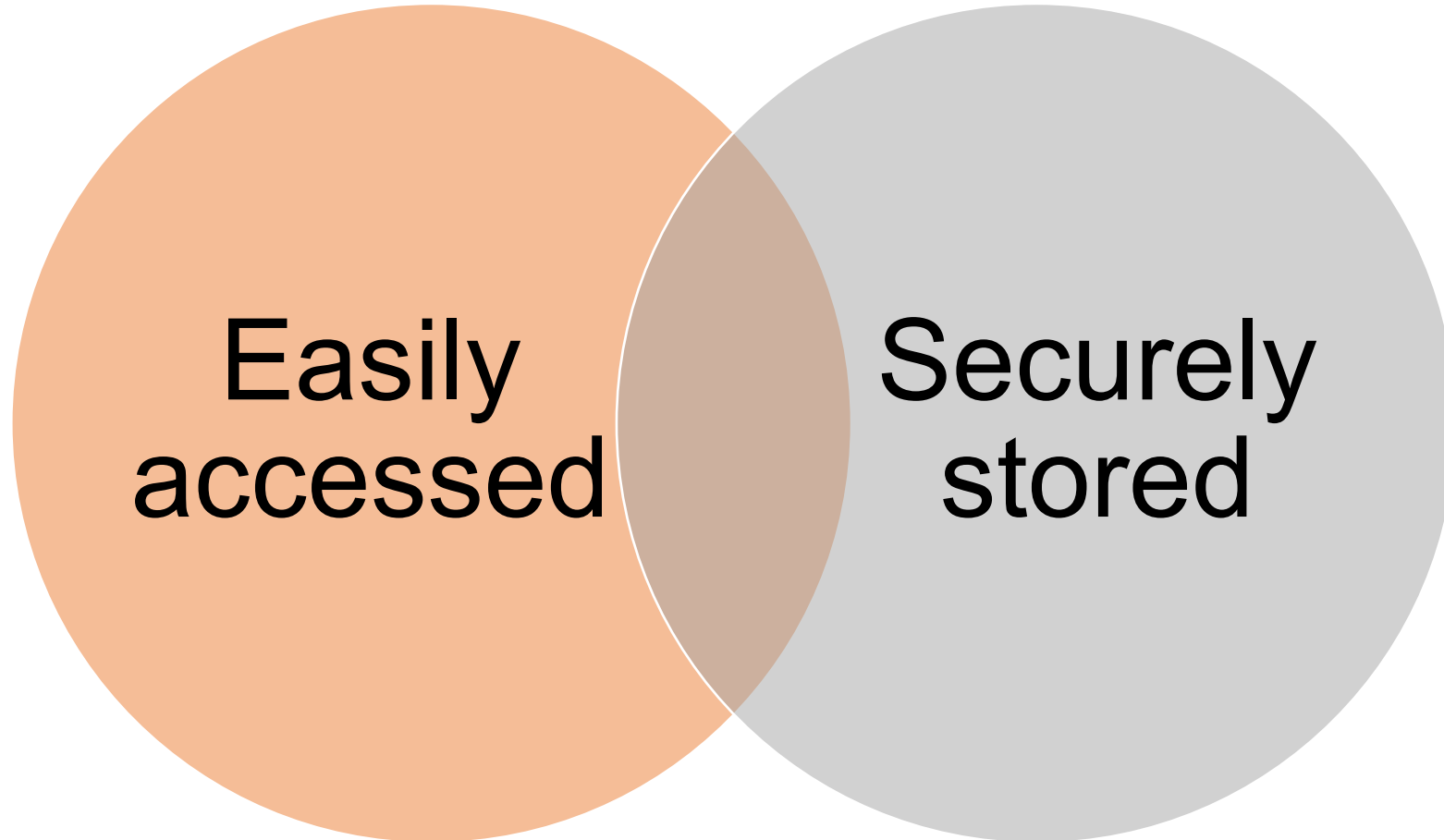


**“You’re not a  
gun owner,  
are you?”**

# The limitations of “counseling as usual”

- 73% of parents of high risk teens with guns do not keep guns out of the home; 16% of parents without guns acquired them (Brent et al 2001)
- Up to 1/3 of young boys pull trigger when left unsupervised near firearms despite safety training / parental belief (Jackman 2001)
- 22% of kids have handled guns in the home without parents' knowledge (Baxley 2006)
- Approximately 1/3 adults who voluntarily relinquished firearms after voluntary admission re-acquire within 2 years (Sherman 2001)
- Only 6% of MISA Patients recall being asked about firearms in the past year (Carney 2002)

# Most gun owners want them for self defense



# When to ask

- As part of any risk assessment (new evaluation or due to elevated concern of suicide or violence)
- Self-injury, physical violence, or related ideations, threats, or plans
- Concern of domestic / intimate partner violence
- Also: Substance use, anger issues, impulsivity
- Any accidental injury in the home, especially involving children
- Aging & dementia concerns





**Eager for our guidance**

**Open to discussion**

**Judging us for asking**





**Gosh, I don't  
know much  
about guns...**

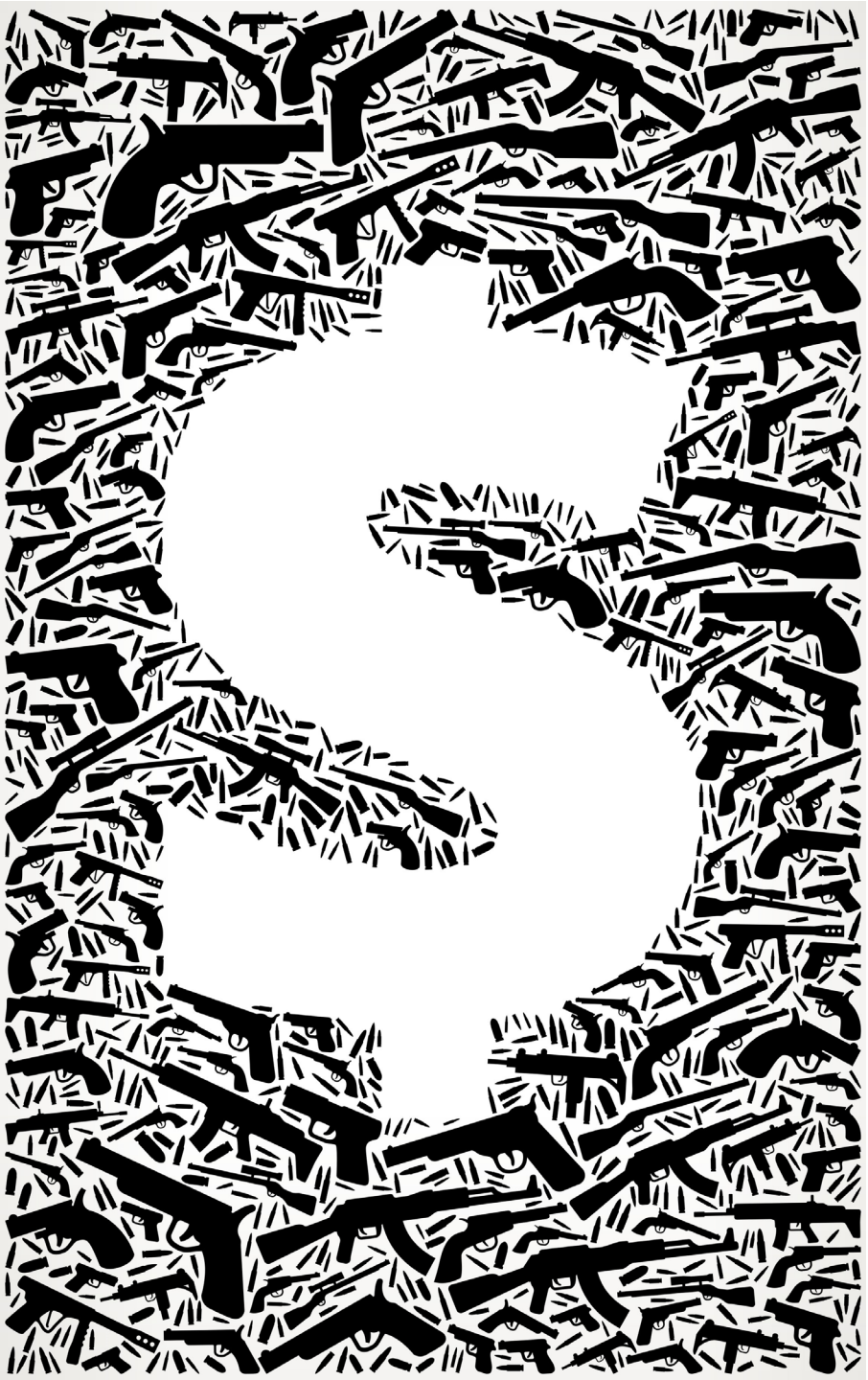
**Would you  
describe your  
gun for me?**

**How do you store  
your guns at home?**

**How many guns do  
you have at home?**

**Tell me about the  
guns in your home.**





**If you needed a gun,  
how would you get it?**

**How long would it take  
you to get a gun?**



# Asking about access

**A**ccess

**E**xperience

**I**deation or Intent

**O**perational plan or practice

**U**nconcerned with consequences

# Warning signs (PHASES)



**P**roximity change

**H**ostility / **H**atefulness

**A**cquisition despite exclusion

**S**ubstance use

**E**scalating purchases

**S**uicidal or hopeless

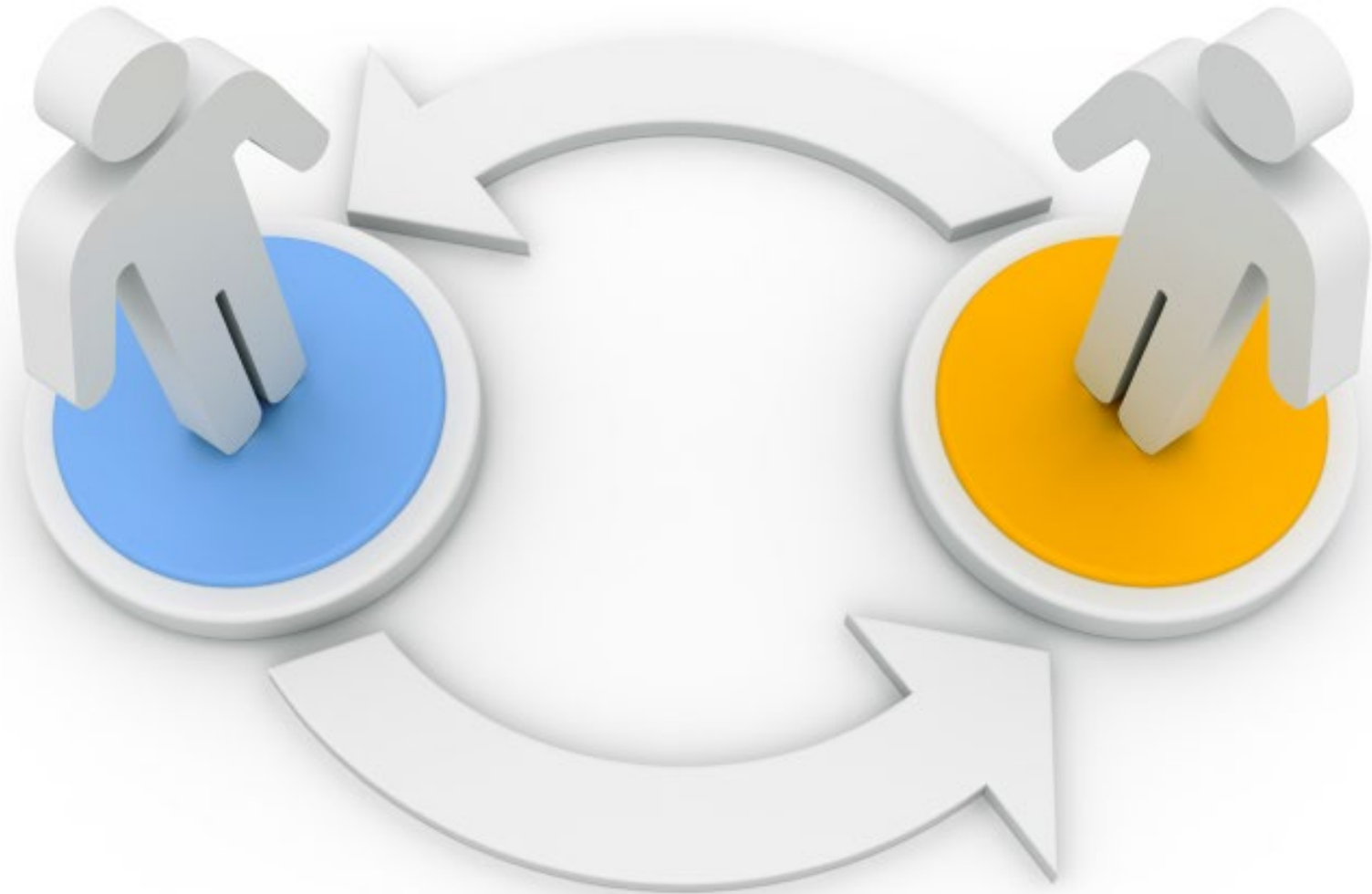


# On changing ~~lightbulbs~~

*Behaviors!*



**Engagement is the critical goal,  
and a predicate for safer storage**



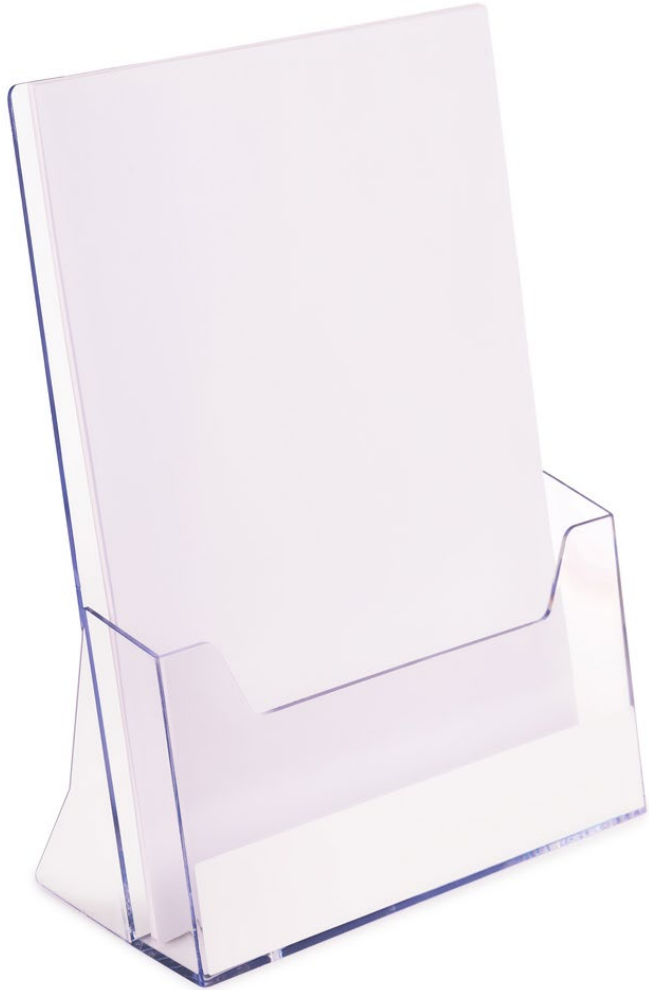


# Most patients are open to discussing safer storage (Betz et al 2016)

- Empathize with affect
- Engage on shared interests
- Focus on priorities
- Evoke commitment
- Planning first steps and follow up
- Agree – or agree to disagree

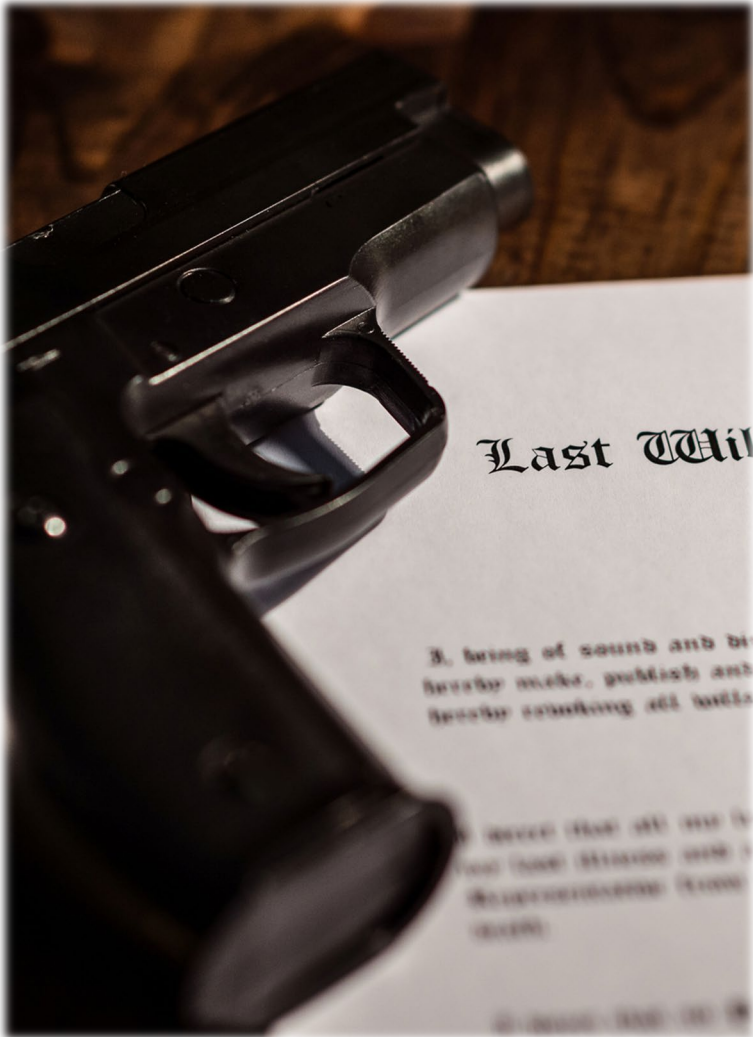


# Make it easy, make it universal



- Brochures and educational material universally distributed, in waiting area
- “If you would like to learn more ask your clinician...”
- Digital signage
- Readily available locks to distribute (or clear instructions on accessing)
- “I know you have some lived experience, maybe you will find somebody who needs it...”

# A retirement plan for the gun



- Triggers: driving issues, not recognizing family, missing/lost possessions or worries of possessions being stolen
- Part of end of life planning (will, living will, DPA, advanced directives)
- Who is the trusted friend to take the gun? (military buddy, partner, etc.)
- Making sure it is safely handed down to kids / grandkids in accordance with owner's wishes (**not** taking the gun away)



# May I offer some suggestions?

## **Somewhere else** (store it)

- Respite storage programs
- At work
- Storage locker
- Safe friend/relative's home
- Law enforcement agencies

## **Sell it**

- Pawn it
- Buyback programs
- Gun dealers
- Armslist, etc.

## **Safer: Secure it at home**

- Locked with ammo stored/locked separately
- Locks, safes
- Locked up + key removed
- Disassembled

# General considerations

- If in a home with children or somebody in psychological crisis, should not be left unattended and unsecured
- Never handled while intoxicated
- Properly carried (in a holster, not a pocket)
- Properly stored (in a locked safe or case, not a drawer)



# Key points

- Safer storage reduces the risk of firearm suicide and accidental shootings / negligent discharges
- Limited options for involuntary removal → we need to focus on collaborative interventions
- Cross cultural problem with a motivational interviewing solution



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**Thank you!**

# Suggested Readings

- Anestis, Michael D. 2018. *Guns and Suicide: An American Epidemic*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rozel JS, Mulvey EP. The Link between Mental Illness and Gun Violence: Implications for Social Policy. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*. 2017;13(1):445–69.  
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- Sale, Elizabeth, Michelle Hendricks, Virginia Weil, Collin Miller, Scott Perkins, and Suzanne McCudden. 2017. “Counseling on Access to Lethal Means (CALM): An Evaluation of a Suicide Prevention Means Restriction Training Program for Mental Health Providers.” *Community Mental Health Journal*, November, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10597-017-0190-z>.
- Rand Science of Gun Policy book and website: <https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy.html>