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Lack of Federal Funding, Research + Political Influence Yields Little Data, Confidence to Prevent Gun Violence

Health policy analysts explain how what we don't know can kill us

CHICAGO (August 2, 2016) – [More than 90 deaths per day](#) in the United States are attributed to gun violence. Still, after all these deaths and the unconscionable mass shootings in recent decades, little is known about gun violence primarily due to a lack of federal funding and research on the topic. Health policy analysts Ted Alcorn, research director at Everytown for Gun Safety, and David Hemenway, professor of health policy in the T.H. Chan School of Public Health at Harvard University, will address the political and legislative challenges involved with researching gun violence at the Joint Statistical Meetings (JSM 2016) in Chicago August 2 at 10:30 a.m.

JSM 2016 is the largest gathering of statisticians and data scientists in the world.

“From 1997 to 2012, the share of scientific publications on the connection between firearms and crime or violence fell by some 60%,” notes Alcorn. This decline coincides with another development: For the past two decades, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provided almost no financial support for firearms research.

As the nation’s health protection agency, the CDC conducts science to save lives and protect people from expensive and deadly health threats. At one time, it also studied the prevalence of gun violence. But, in 1996, Congress passed the “Dickey Amendment,” limiting funds allocated for injury prevention and control from being used to *advocate* or *promote* gun control. Though legal experts argue this move technically did not order the CDC to stop researching gun violence, health policy analysts note it stifled work there and at universities and other organizations dependent on CDC-issued grants.

Routine tracking of incidents sheds light on the dangers of accessibility, particularly among today’s youth. [By compiling media reports of unintentional child shootings](#), Alcorn’s group found that three-year-olds shoot guns more than any other age group, and nearly two-thirds of shootings take place when a child was thought to be in a safe setting, be it their own home or a relative’s.

Media can attend JSM 2016 for free, but must register in advance by contacting Jill Talley, ASA public relations manager, at (703) 302-1865 or jill@amstat.org.

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About JSM 2016

Occurring annually since 1974, JSM is a joint effort of the American Statistical Association, International Biometric Society (ENAR and WNAR), Institute of Mathematical Statistics, Statistical Society of Canada, International Chinese Statistical Association, International Indian Statistical Association, Korean International Statistical Society, International Society for Bayesian Analysis, Royal Statistical Society, and International Statistical Institute. JSM activities include oral presentations, panel sessions, poster presentations, professional development courses, an exhibit hall, a career service, society and section business meetings, committee meetings, social activities and networking opportunities.

About the American Statistical Association

The ASA is the world's largest community of statisticians and the oldest continuously operating professional science society in the United States. Its members serve in industry, government and academia in more than 90 countries, advancing research and promoting sound statistical practice to inform public policy and improve human welfare. For additional information, please visit the ASA website at www.amstat.org.

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