

Abstract

According to the Centers for Disease Control, nine children and teens are killed each day with a firearm. Though much attention is given to mass shootings and massacres in schools and public locations, a majority of these deaths occur in homes with unsecured or improperly stored weapons. Unfortunately, more and more children are being shot accidentally by other children or with self-inflicted wounds in accidental shootings when guns are left in accessible locations without gun locks. With nearly 400 million firearms owned by civilians across the country, there are many opportunities for children to access weapons if they are not secured properly.

One way to prevent these unfortunate deaths is for pediatricians and prenatal classes to mention the importance of gun safety around children. While time is spent discussing securing

important security features, such as gun locks or gun safes. Often a doctor only remembers to mention this when a child is already at an age when they can crawl or walk, and it may already be too late.

This project hopes to build on our previous SURE research focused on understanding the role of healthcare workers, including pediatricians and prenatal education providers, as educators about firearm safety. Through continued surveys of parents about their experiences with prenatal classes and pediatric information and interviews with healthcare workers in Illinois with a new addition of focus groups with families and healthcare professionals, this research hopes to continue understanding the current landscape for firearm safety education in pediatric and prenatal settings and understand the potential policy changes we can make to decrease unnecessary firearm deaths.

In the end, findings from this research project hope to be shared with criminal justice, public health, and medical personnel as it has impacts that reach across multiple disciplines.

deaths were from playing with a gun while 17% occurred while hunting. An important thing to consider in these studies is that children are only able to play with a gun if they have access to it. By educating parents and guardians about safe firearm storage, firearm usage, and gunlocks, there

Public Health Impacts

The death of a child in a home can have long lasting effects on the family. Beyond other children in the home being put at risk when a child has access to a gun, if the gun is used and leads to injury or death there are serious ramifications for the mental health of the siblings and other

Student Research Aim: Provide a student researcher the opportunity to conduct mixed methods research in the social sciences. By completing both survey research and interviews with health care workers, a student research assistant will have the opportunity to use multiple research methods in practice.

Approach & Methodology

The survey and interview protocol have been developed, but a focus group protocol needs to be developed so that will be the first step for the summer and then develop a plan to recruit for the focus groups. In addition to the focus groups, the goal is to continue our survey distribution of at least 150 new parents across Illinois. Through surveys over the internet parents will be asked about whether or not they received education about firearm safety during prenatal visits, received education during pediatric care visits, or had firearms discussed with them anywhere in their new parenting journey. During the surveys, parents will also be asked about their need for firearm education, whether they would be receptive to education and reminders about gun safes and gun locks, and when would be the best time for them to hear about this education.

During the summer, there is also a goal to interview pediatricians and family medicine doctors who have patients as young as two years old will be interviewed. Information will be gathered about their approaches to educating new parents about firearm safety inside the home, including questions about whether or not they feel educated on this topic themselves. In addition to questions about early childhood education, this sample will be asked about whether or not they continue to educate parents and children about firearm safety as the child ages. The data collected from healthcare staff will use qualitative methods with semi-structured interviews.

After data collection is completed, analysis will be conducted on the survey data. Demographics, including race, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, location, and other features of the participant, will be collected to determine if there are differences in feelings based on specific indicators of participants. The open-ended responses from the surveys will be coded to find common themes, as well. The interviews collected from healthcare professionals will also be coded using appropriate software. Interrater reliability will be tested to ensure that the research team is consistent with findings from the interviews. The undergraduate researcher will be trained by the study PI on statistical methods and qualitative interview coding.

Mentorship Plan

Criminal Justice students receive only one semester worth of research methods in a classroom setting, unless they double major or minor in a department like Psychology, and often limited hands-on research opportunities, so as part of the mentorship, there will be a focus on teaching coding, statistics, and additional research methods. As the survey will be distributed via online surveys, the student will be taught methods for sharing surveys in digital spaces, such as Twitter, Facebook, and other social media outlets. Towards the end of the summer, the student will be taught data cleaning methods, as well, to ensure that the data collected is valid and reliable. Students will not be expected to have taken statistics prior to this project, so they will be taught basic inferential statistical methods, covering topics like correlation, OLS regression, and logistic regression using Stata. As for the interviews, the student will be coached on how to conduct semi-structured interviews. After the interviews are completed, the student will work with their mentor to create a codebook and will work with the mentor to code the initial interviews. Then the student and the mentor will both code the interviews to ensure interrater reliability, which is a topic discussed in most of our research method courses.

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