

**Palm Beach County Medical Society
Position Statement**

Gun Violence -What Can Physicians Do?

The Parkland tragedy has brought the gun violence epidemic into our backyard. The victims are our friends, neighbors and our children. Our colleague, a Parkland physician, lost his 14-year-old daughter. Other physicians have children attending Marjorie Stoneman Douglas. Physicians treated the victims.

Shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School was the 30th mass shooting—a shooting in which four or more people are killed or injured—of 2018. The American Medical Association has issued a position reflecting gun violence as a public health crisis. The CDC estimates that in 2016, over 38,000 people died and more than 80,000 people were injured by a firearm, whether by homicide or suicide. Guns kill more people than HIV, hypertension and colon cancer. Gunshot wounds cost Americans over 2.8 billion dollars in hospital fees each year. By all measures, gun violence is a public health crisis in this country.

Consider these statistics:

- Three of the 10 deadliest mass shootings in modern U.S. history have come in the past five months.
- 30,000 American men, women and children dying from gun violence and firearm-related accidents each year, the time to act is now.
- On an average day, more than 100 Americans die from gun violence and firearm-related accidents.

Physicians are in a unique position to assess risk, provide education and change behaviors related to gun violence. In addition, physicians have an important role to play in advocacy, public opinion.

Palm Beach County Medical supports the policy of the AMA and 106 Medical Associations which calls for:

- Renewing and strengthening the assault weapons ban, including banning high-capacity magazines.
- Providing for more resources for safety education programs that promote more responsible use and storage of firearms.
- Resources to comprehensive access to mental health services, including screening, prevention and treatment.
- Training of health professionals to respond to those who have a mental illness that might make them more prone to commit violence.
- Reversing the 1997 legislation which forbids the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention agency from funding any research that "may be used to advocate or promote gun control." violence.