

SNAPSHOT

Nudging doctors to counsel parents on safe gun storage

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More than four million U.S. children live in households with loaded and unlocked firearms, yet few pediatricians follow the recommendation of the American Academy of Pediatrics to counsel parents and guardians on storing guns securely. *Harvard Public Health* spoke with Rinad Beidas, professor and chair of medical social sciences at Northwestern University, about her research on the topic.

Why study this topic?

Firearm injury has become the leading cause of death for young people. This secure storage approach is nonpartisan and scalable. To move the needle on firearm injury and mortality, we need to take a multi-level public health approach.

What did you find?

The study involved 30 clinics and data from almost 50,000 well-child visits. Children and parents going to clinics that had the EHR prompt plus facilitation received the whole program (counseling and a lock offer) 49 percent of the time whereas children and parents going to clinics that only had the EHR prompt received the program 22 percent of the time.

Before our study, we found that clinicians offered counseling and gun locks in only two percent of well-child visits. This robust change is meaningful. This study represents the work of many partners, and we did a lot of preparatory work before testing those two approaches, which likely led to the successful results.

What would you like to see happen based on the study's results?

I hope we can move toward a national approach with this strategy, or strategies like it. Also, there are many other places where the message of secure storage to save lives can be shared, like schools, churches, and health centers. We have a road map for how to do this work, and the time is ripe to take action.

—Sarah Muthler

(Study in *JAMA Pediatrics* (<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2822858>), September 2024)

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