

# Panel Discussion

“What Research is Needed to Help Inform Policy”

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# Introduction:

## *Firearms and Suicide*

- Firearms have a much greater fatality rate (91%) than any other commonly employed suicide method
  - *E.g., poisoning accounts for 74% of suicidal acts but has only a 2% fatality rate (Brewer, 2010)*
- The mere presence of a firearm in a home significantly increases the risk of completed suicide for the population as a whole and for every age group” (Brewer, 2010)
- The risk of suicide in households who keep guns on the premises is two-ten times that of households where no gun is present (Miller, 2012)

# **Firearm Suicide:**

## ***Importance of Prevention and Intervention***

- Suicidal behavior is crisis-oriented and acute in nature
- Interval between decision to suicide and act is short
  - **13% are 8 hours or more**
  - **70% are less than 1 hour**
  - **24% are less than 5 minutes**
- Ease of access to lethal means during a suicidal crisis influences the suicidal person's behavior (Sarchiapone, 2011)
- Suicidal individuals living in households where firearms are present are 700% more likely to plan their death with a gun than those who do not have such immediate access (Betz, 2011)

# **Firearm Suicide:**

## ***Importance of Prevention and Intervention***

- Delaying access to preferred lethal means can allow the impulse to pass before it can be acted upon (Sarchiapone, 2011)
- This is particularly compelling given that research suggests that many, if not most, individuals who are able to make it through a suicidal crisis will never go on to attempt suicide (Id.)
- Even where the suicidal person attempts with less lethal means, there is a greater possibility the person will survive the suicide attempt and receive help to prevent future attempts (Id.)

## **Priority Research Topics**

- 1. Characteristics related to firearm used in suicide**
- 2. Lethal means restriction interventions**
- 3. Risk factors specific to firearm suicide completers**

# Domain 1: Characteristics of Gun Violence

## ***1. Research to determine characteristics related to the firearm used in suicide death:***

### **Examples:**

- **Type of firearm used to complete suicide**
- **Date purchased**
- **Person purchasing**
- **Who owned and possessed at time of suicide**
- **Where and how was firearm stored**
- **Method by which decedent obtained access**
- **Time between access and completed suicide**

# **Domain 2: Interventions and Strategies**

## ***2. Lethal Means Restriction***

- **Research regarding the application of lethal means restriction to individual level interventions**
- **Identification of most effective method to deliver and message lethal means restriction**
- **Identify methods to institutionalize lethal means restriction (if determined effective) in standard care practice – doctors, mental health and SA providers**
  - **Normalize in 5-10 years similar to designating a sober driver today**

# Domain 5: Risk and Protective Factors

## ***3. Risk factors specific to firearm suicide completers***

- **Research regarding specific risk factors of persons who kill themselves with guns**
  - particularly men and particularly in rural and frontier areas

### **Examples**

- **Alcohol use at time or shortly preceding death**
- **Alcohol/drug dependence or heavy use**
- **Mental health diagnosis**
- **Mental health treatment**
- **Adverse life events**
- **Precipitating circumstances – divorce, loss of work, etc.**

# Sources Cited

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