



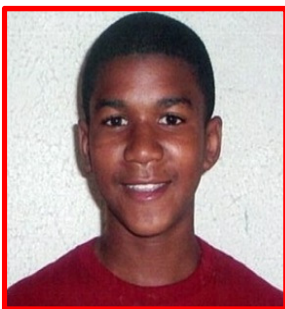
September 22, 2013

Healthy Sunday Topic: Gun Violence and the Impact on Our Communities

According to **Tamera Coyne-Beasley, MD, MPH of UNC Pediatrics, Internal Medicine and the School of Public Health,**

“the impact of guns on the African American community is significant as the African American community has a disproportionate number of firearm deaths.” Between the years 2000 and 2010 an average of 4900 black males died each year from gun violence. Furthermore, for every death there is another 24 victims who suffer non-fatal injuries. The rate of gun-homicide for black males is 2.4 times as high as Latino males and 15.3 times as high as non-Hispanic white males. An even more troubling statistic is that blacks make up 48% of gun-homicide victims, and only make up around 13% of the population.

These issues are seen most prominently with young people in the community. A report from the Department of Justice stated that young black males under the age of 25 make up over 25% of all reported homicide offenders. Homicide is the leading cause of death for black youth ages 15-24 years and young adults ages 25-34 years.



Guns Escalate the Violence in Confrontations and Disputes

One issue that the tragic shooting of Trayvon Martin demonstrated was the ability for the presence of firearms to escalate the outcomes of fear, racial profiling, and disputes. During a confrontation, if a gun is present, there could be a deadly change in the outcome as people are prone to use guns in this situation rather than solve the problem amicably.

Guns and Mental Health

The presence of a gun in the home increases the risk of homicide and especially suicide among occupants of the home, rather than protect families against intruders. The most common way for teens to commit suicide is with a gun obtained from the home of a family member or friend. Though blacks ages 10-24 have a lower suicide rate than whites or Latinos, blacks are the most likely to commit suicide with a gun. Of note, most guns used in school shootings and domestic violence deaths are also obtained from the homes of family or friends.

The presence of guns significantly increases the self-harm caused by individuals with mental illness, such as depression or bipolar disease. Currently there are not enough firearm laws in place or enforced to prevent people with mental illness from gaining possession of guns and causing harm to themselves or others. Our community members with mental health disorders need to be able to access mental health care rather than guns. Guns should absolutely be removed from the homes of people with mental illness.

How to Prevent Gun Violence

There is no easy way to reduce gun violence but strategies to reduce poverty and increase employment are needed. Additional efforts are also needed to create safe and productive environments in which young African Americans feel that they have opportunities in their lives. Improving education, reengaging and supporting students who are struggling or have dropped out, expanding opportunities for work, promoting healing from trauma and adversity, and creating programs to engage young people and improve their outlook and future opportunities are important.

Additionally, community members can contact legislatures in support of gun regulation. Parents and families have a role in getting guns out of the homes and hands of young people and those with mental illness. The safest environment for teens, children and those with mental illness is to remove guns from the home. If you decide to remove your gun from your home, local law enforcement can instruct you how to properly dispose of a gun. If you choose to have a gun in your home it should be stored to minimize access to and discharge of that weapon.

- a) Unload the gun so that ALL the bullets are removed
- b) Lock up the gun in a locked compartment, box or cabinet AND store the ammunition in a separate locked compartment (to the right are examples of storage devices)
- c) A gun lock can be used for extra safety and can be obtained from the Durham County Gun Safety Team
- d) Store the keys in a separate place, inaccessible to youth

Four Important Lessons to Teach to Your Children

- Settle arguments with words, not fists or weapons. Don't stand around and form an audience when others are arguing.
- Learn safe routes for walking in the neighborhood, and know good places to seek help. Know how to contact your parents in the event of an emergency.
- If you find a gun—stop, don't touch the gun, get away, and tell a grown-up that you trust.
- Report any crimes or suspicious activities to police, school authorities, and parents



REMEMBER

Act by removing guns from your home or store them safely; **B**e mindful to provide safe and supportive environments, and educational and job opportunities for our young people; and **C**onfrontations and disputes should be settled without guns

Resources

- <http://durhamnc.gov/ich/op/DPD/Documents/Newsletter%20Aug12.pdf>
- <http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/Taking-Aim-at-Gun-Violence.pdf>
- http://www.ojjdp.gov/pubs/gun_violence/contents.html
- <http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/>
- Durham County Gun Safety Team- Coordinator: Mrs. Joanie Ross- jross@ph.co.durham.nc.us

Health Tip is a message from your Community Health Coalition, Inc. and is written in partnership with Durham Academy of Medicine, Dentistry and Pharmacy, Old North State Medical Society, North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Co., Central Carolina Black Nurses' Council Inc, Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Durham and Vicinity & Duke Regional Hospital.

REMEMBER Healthy People 2020: A Clear Vision to Healthy Living!