

Effects of Firearm Regulation on Suicide Rates

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Question

- In the United States, do increased gun regulations compared to minimal gun regulations affect suicide completion rates?

Background

Definition of Suicide

- Suicide is defined as: death caused by injuring oneself with the intent to die. Suicide is not influenced by one individual factor, it includes a combination of psychosocial, biological, interpersonal, environmental and societal influences (Stone, et. al., 2017).

National & State Firearm Laws

- National firearm laws include: The National Firearms Act of 1934, The Gun Control Act of 1968, The Firearm Owners Protection Act of 1986, The Brady Handgun Violence Act of 1993, and The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (NPR, 2008)
- State firearm laws include: mandatory waiting periods, universal background checks, gun lock requirements, limitations on open carry (NPR, 2008).

Current Statistics

- In 2017, suicide was the tenth leading cause of death in the United States (CDC).
- Suicide rates increased 28% from 2000 to 2015 (CDC, 2015).
- In 2015, suicide by firearm accounted for half of all suicide completions (CDC).

Study	Description	Results
Associations Between Gun Laws and Suicides, 2019	Level III retrospective comparative study that examined the impact of state legislation (scored A, B, C, D, F on Brady Violence Scale) on suicide completion rates in hospitals.	Results indicated that “stricter gun laws were associated with lower rates of firearm suicides in the overall population” (Ghani et al. 2019). Laws such as requiring a permit to purchase a handgun, registration of handguns, and license to own a handgun are useful in decreasing the overall suicide rate.
Handgun Legislation and Changes in Statewide Overall Suicide Rates, 2017	Level III retrospective comparative study that examined the impact of four state laws (mandatory waiting periods, universal background checks, gun lock requirements, open carry limitations) on suicide completion rates.	Results indicated that only certain laws (universal background checks, mandatory waiting periods) are useful in decreasing overall suicide rates (Anestis et al., 2017).
Weaker Gun State Laws are Associated with Higher Rates of Suicide Secondary to Firearms, 2017	Level III retrospective comparative study that examined the impact of 14 state laws on suicide completion rates.	Results indicated that in states that were less strict there was a significantly higher rate of firearm suicide attempts; nevertheless, based on the study design it does not prove that there is a direct association between the incidence and mortality from firearm guns and specific regulations (Alban et al. 2017).
The Association Between State Laws Regulating Handgun Ownership and Statewide Suicide Rates, 2015	Level III retrospective cross-sectional study that examined the impact of three state laws (permit to purchase a handgun, registration of handgun, license to own a handgun) on suicide completion rates.	Results indicated all three laws (permit to purchase a handgun, registration of handguns, and license to own a handgun) are useful in decreasing the overall suicide rate (Anestis et al., 2015).

Conclusion

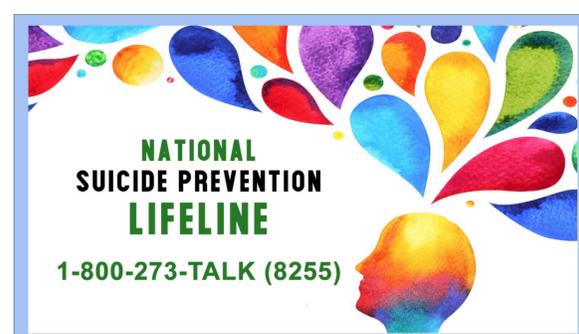
- Overall, implementing stricter firearm regulations decreased suicide rates.
- Majority of the articles supported the PICOT question; however, some articles did not show decreased suicide completion rate.
- As a result, more research is needed to definitively answer the PICOT question.

Application

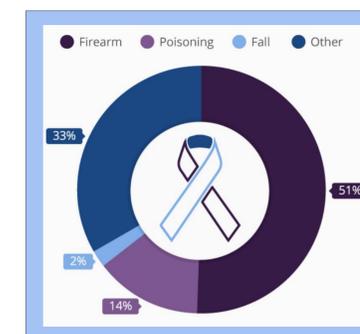
- Nurses can potentially apply the information from this study to advocate for stricter firearm regulation and decrease suicide rates in the United States.
- Nurses must be informed on current issues and laws in their state and nation.
- Possible interventions the nurse could implement include: education on gun safety, organizing educational community classes to increase gun safety, providing mental health resources, and fostering an environment for discussion around legislation.
- Nurses may use the findings of this research to screen for gun usage and accessibility in mental health assessments.



<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/suicide/resources.html>



<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pub/technical-packages/infographic/sp.html>



<https://www.statista.com/chart/19337/firearm-deaths-united-states/>