

## **Position Statement**

on

## **FIREARMS**

### **Background**

In the spring of 2023, the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) and the Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS) surveyed their members to ascertain neurosurgeons' views on various firearms-related topics.<sup>1</sup> Firearm injuries and death impact the vast majority of neurosurgeons, with more than 80% reporting that they care for patients with firearm injuries in their practice. The continued prevalence of firearm-related injury and death among neurosurgical patients has demonstrated the need for the neurosurgical community to reflect upon its role in research and policy regarding firearms. The survey results also indicated an interest in a balanced, non-partisan approach toward firearm injury prevention that adheres to evidence-based decision-making principles.

### **AANS/CNS Position Statement**

Due to the traumatic injuries and deaths that are caused by firearms, which create a public health concern for Americans, and our rightful role as patient advocates, the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) and Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS) support:

1. Responsible and safe gun ownership to reduce firearm-related injury and death;
2. Preserving physician autonomy to have an open dialogue with their patients regarding firearms and their health and health care needs;
3. Development and promotion of public education programs aimed at encouraging safe firearm use, storage and ownership;
4. Funding for improved data collection tools and high-quality research on firearm injury to inform evidence-based decisions regarding policies to reduce firearm injury and death; and
5. Partnering with organizations whose principles align with organized neurosurgery to leverage resources and maximize our impact in advocacy supporting evidence-based firearm injury prevention efforts.

### **Rationale**

The AANS and the CNS believe this balanced approach to firearms policy and advocacy is critical, as evidenced by the following:

- ❖ In 2021 there were 14.6 gun deaths per 100,000 people in the United States. Fifty-four percent were suicides, 43% were homicides and the remainder were accidental, undetermined or involved law enforcement.<sup>2</sup>
- ❖ In 2020, firearms were among the top 5 leading causes of death among people ages 1-44, and nonfatal firearm injuries were more common than firearm-related mortalities.<sup>3</sup>
- ❖ Firearm deaths among U.S. children and teenagers increased by 50% between 2019 and 2021, primarily driven by an increase in homicides and secondarily by the rise in suicides by

firearms. Firearms are now the leading cause of death of children and adolescents aged 1 to 19, surpassing motor vehicle crashes.<sup>4,5</sup>

- ❖ Most respondents to the 2023 AANS/CNS firearms survey (78.7%) favored the involvement of organized neurosurgery in advocacy efforts, including at the local, regional and national levels.<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ Among the barriers to achieving bipartisan legislation to reduce firearm injuries is the limited data available establishing the causal effects of firearm policies on various outcomes related to firearm ownership.
  - There is a lack of high-quality research regarding firearm legislation's effects on firearm injury and death, leading to disagreements among experts on the effects of specific policies.<sup>6</sup>
  - Investments in both data infrastructure and comprehensive research on gun violence and its prevention could help address shortcomings in our understanding of firearm-related injuries and death.<sup>7</sup> Supporting these efforts reflects the views of AANS and CNS members based on the 2023 firearms survey.
- ❖ The AANS and the CNS are well-positioned to make informed decisions regarding support for advocacy efforts in concert with organizations with similar views.

## **References**

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3. Firearm Violence and Injury Prevention. *FastStats*. *CDC.gov*. Published September 19, 2023. Accessed December 29, 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/firearms/fastfact.html>
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5. Gramlich J. Gun deaths among U.S. children and teens rose 50% in two years. *Pew Research Center*. April 6, 2023. Accessed on December 29, 2023. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/04/06/gun-deaths-among-us-kids-rose-50-percent-in-two-years/>
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