Refocusing Firearm Policies Away from Mental Illness & Towards Stronger Indicators of Risk of Harm

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More than 33,000 gun deaths and 84,000 non fatal gunshot injuries per year

Source: CDC’s WISQARS™ (Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System). Fatal Injury Reports, 1999-2013, for National, Regional, and States; Nonfatal Injury Reports, 2001 - 2013
New Mexico Firearm Deaths in 2013

Source: CDC’s WISQARS™ (Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System). Fatal Injury Reports, 1999-2013, for National, Regional, and States
Firearm Deaths in New Mexico

Source: CDC’s WISQARS™ (Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System). Fatal Injury Reports, 1999-2013, for National, Regional, and States
Firearm Death Rates: United States and New Mexico

Source: CDC’s WISQARS™ (Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System). Fatal Injury Reports, 1999-2013, for National, Regional, and States
Legal Context:
Supreme Court recognizes legal right to a gun in the home for self defense

But that right is not unlimited.
Who can exercise the right safely?
**Federal Prohibitors:**
Felons; fugitives; persons who have been involuntarily committed, those convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence; those subject to permanent domestic violence restraining orders; unlawful users or those addicted to a controlled substance

**New Mexico:**
New Mexico state law does NOT mirror most federal firearm prohibitions; nor does it have expanded firearm prohibitions

Who should be prohibited from purchasing and possessing firearms?

Can evidence help us do a better job identifying risk?
I Turned to the Experts...

March 2013: Convened at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore MD

- Public Health Researchers
- Mental Health Providers
- Medical Professionals
- Gun Violence Prevention Advocates
- Policy Experts
- Law Enforcement

Evidence ➔ Consensus ➔ Recommendations
What we found:

Mental illness contributes very little to interpersonal violence but does play a significant role in suicide.

There are other risk factors for dangerous behavior:

- History of violence
- History of domestic violence
- Substance abuse

Current firearm prohibitions are inadequate.

More to come from our panel.
Individuals who are at an increased risk of dangerous behavior should, at least temporarily, be prohibited, where constitutionally acceptable, from purchasing and possessing firearms.
More to come from our panel

#1 Mental Health Risk Factors

- Involuntary hospitalization prohibition

#2 Other Risk Factors

- Violent misdemeanants;
- Temporary DV orders;
- DUIs, DWIs;
- Substance abuse

#3 Periods of Crisis

- Gun Violence Restraining Order
Requiring background checks on all gun sales improves a risk-based approach.
Today is an Opportunity

Consider the evidence and ask questions

How does the evidence affect New Mexico policy?

Where does my work fit in?