

Treating gun violence as a disease

July 9 2014, by Stasia Thompson

Approximately 82 people in Chicago were reportedly injured and 14 died as a result of gun violence during the extended Fourth of July weekend.

"Those injured or killed are too young and too many," said DeAndre Williams, MD, an emergency physician at Loyola University Health System who worked the holiday. "At Loyola, we are seeing multiple gunshot wounds now as automatic rifles are replacing single-shot weapons, which is an alarming trend."

Some of the violence occurred in Chicago's Garfield Park, less than five miles from Maywood, where Loyola is located.

"Just as with any disease, violence requires awareness, education, prevention, treatment and support to be overcome," said Mark Cichon, DO, chair of the Department of Emergency Medicine of Loyola University Medical Center. "Gun violence is a complex, multifaceted public health problem and requires a complex, multifaceted public health strategy. Chicago is one of the largest urban centers in America, so everything here – the good and the bad – is magnified." Cichon also serves on the board of directors of the Illinois College of Emergency Physicians and was recently honored by the state of Illinois for his contributions to improving pediatric health.

Loyola regularly works with community groups and hospital chaplains to diffuse gun and gang violence cases.

Alarming gun violence statistics

- The average hospital cost for a gunshot wound is \$540,000.
- Handguns (rather than rifles or other types of guns) account for 80 percent of [gun violence](#).
- More than 50 percent of shootings have involved alcohol, consumed either by the victim, the shooter or both.
- Of deaths from gunfire in the home, 50 percent of victims knew their shooter, with only 20 percent related to home invasions and only 1 percent ruled justifiable homicides, as in self-defense.

"Many of Loyola's ED staff rarely see the fireworks with their friends and families because of high volumes during the Fourth of July holiday and, unfortunately, we often see the gunfire victims," Cichon said. "The violence statistics are up this year as compared with last year, so I know that emergency departments will likely be busy next holiday."

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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