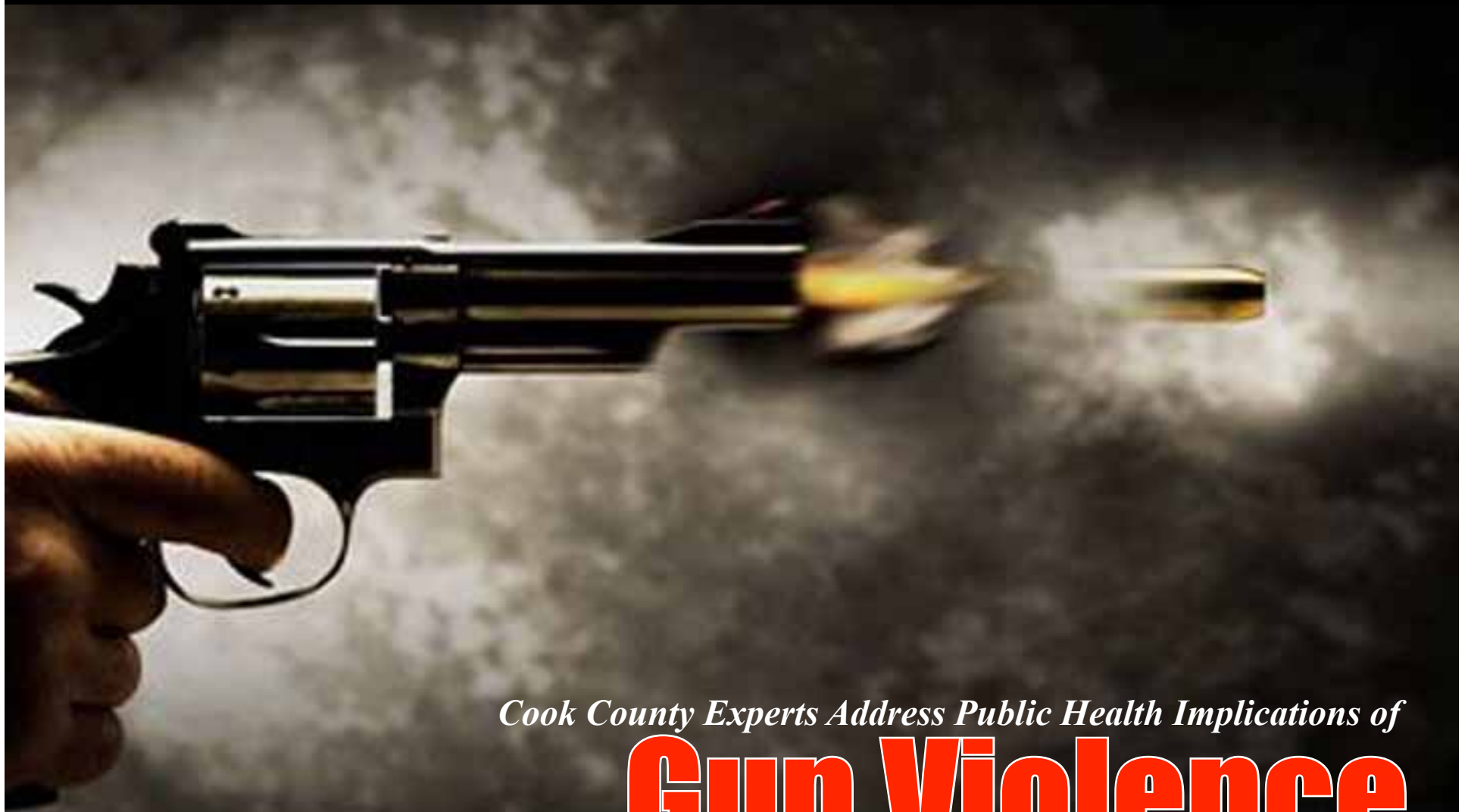


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Cook County Experts Address Public Health Implications of

Gun Violence

*Los Expertos del Condado de Cook Hablan
sobre las Implicaciones en la Salud Pública de la*

Violencia con Armas

Cook County Experts Address Public Health Implications of Gun Violence

By: Ashmar Mandou

Cook County Board of

Commissioners President Toni Preckwinkle joined by clinical experts on Tuesday to deliberate over gun violence as a public health issue in Cook County. "When we talk about gun violence in Chicago, Cook County and America, we rarely frame the issue as a public health crisis. And that's wrong. Because for every other health issue or disease affecting our communities – whether it's the flu or cancer or AIDS – we rely on clinical data to inform our governance, legislation and science to try to improve outcomes for our residents and patients," President Preckwinkle said. "Willful ignorance to our gun crisis enables it to flourish." In 2017, 744 people in Cook County died in gun-related homicides. More than 1,100 patients were treated for gun-related injuries at Stroger Hospital, the flagship hospital for Cook County Health and Hospitals System (CCHHS) in that same year.

"So we have data available to anybody, to public health [officials], to researchers as to the gunshot victims we see in our office, where they were shot and what are their demographics," Dr. Ponni Arunkumar said. This could help with research and seeing trends with these gunshot [incidences]. Are there particular locations where they're happening more often? Are there other factors involved on how this gun violence is occurring? It



helps with research and public health." The panel of Cook County experts included: Cook County Chief Medical Examiner Dr. Ponni Arunkumar, Dr. Faran Bokhari, Chair, Cook County Trauma & Burn Unit, Stroger Hospital, CCHHS, and Rev. Carol Reese, Violence Prevention Coordinator/Chaplain, Stroger Hospital, CCHHS, and Program Director, Healing Hurt People – Chicago. As part of an effort to increase transparency and awareness of Cook County's public health issues such as gun violence, the Cook County Medical Examiner unveiled a database allowing users to explore data on deaths in Cook County, including gun and drug-related deaths. "This is not rocket science. Guns are meant to enhance the ability to kill a person or themselves," Dr. Bokhari said. "And you see this across the country, with kids dying in Connecticut and people dying in Las Vegas. We always come back to we have to have better mental health support for people, but are you ever going



to be sure that everyone [with a gun] is going to be rational at all times? ... I don't think that's possible, so it's a big question that faces our society." What we're seeing in our hospital and trauma centers throughout the city is we really have to rethink the way we deliver our health care. We can treat people's injuries. We can cure them of their disease processes but to restore people to wholeness after a violent injury is a taller order," Rev. Reese said. "We have

to recognize that the impact of trauma and health outcomes and mental health issues that patients leave the hospital with are significant enough to be addressed by the health system." The expert panel convened is just one step in an information-gathering process to be conducted by President Preckwinkle and her team in the lead-up to unveiling a comprehensive, strategic policy platform later in 2018. Among some of the findings:

- In 2017, CCHHS' Stroger

Hospital on Chicago's near west side cared for more than 1,100 patients with gunshot wounds.

- CCHHS spends an average of \$30,000-50,000 to treat a patient who has been the victim of gun violence. CCHHS spends \$30-40 million annually to treat gunshot wounds. This only includes the cost of initial hospital treatment, not the extensive outpatient or rehabilitation many patients require. Seventy-five percent of gunshot patients have health insurance.

was established in 2013 as a partnership between Stroger Hospital, the University of Chicago Comer Children's Hospital and Center for Nonviolence and Social Justice at Drexel University in Philadelphia to provide violently-injured youth support and address the psychological trauma that can drive the cycle of violence. HHP-C trauma intervention specialists provide psychoeducation and support services to injured youth and their families, including assessing safety and other basic needs to reduce high-risk behaviors, help patients stay safe and create futures for

- Due to the large volume of penetrating injuries treated at Stroger Hospital, medical personnel from the U.S. armed forces rotate through the trauma unit prior to deployment to train and collaborate on advanced medical treatments for catastrophic wounds.

- Violent injury is a recurring medical problem. Youth injured by violence are among those most at risk for future violence and injury. Healing Hurt People-Chicago (HHP-C)

themselves.

- Youth violence and trauma are inextricably linked. Gang-involved youth reported exposure to an average of 10 different types of traumatic stress, mostly chronic, beginning on average at age 6, according to a 2012 survey. Exposure to ongoing violence shapes a person's personality and developmental capacities, including their ability to regulate emotions and to read safety and danger cues.

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High School Students Network Their Way to Success with Support from Exelon Mentors

Stay in School UIC Networking Scavenger Hunt empowers citywide youth to build a network, envision college, and graduate high school. January is National Mentorship Month, and over the weekend, Exelon brought 75 high school students from across the city to the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) campus to visualize what college can be like. These students are participants in the Stay in School Program (SIS), and they come from neighborhoods including Austin, Humboldt Park/West Town, Bridgeport,

Cicero, North Lawndale, Grand Crossing, and Evanston. Mentees included students like 17-year-old Semetrius Holmes from North Lawndale who says these opportunities have helped him develop interpersonal skills that have allowed him to connect and network with peers from across Chicago. Supported by their Exelon mentors, students spent the day building a network as they sought out UIC faculty and students, asked questions about campus resources, and navigated the college campus. Created in 2005,

SIS is a collaboration between United Way, six social service agencies, several Chicago Public Schools, ComEd and Exelon employees. Since the program's inception, SIS has helped 27,000 students graduate from high school in neighborhoods where dropout rates have been among the highest in Chicago. During the 2016-2017 school year, 92 percent of students ages 11 and up who participated in SIS were on track to graduate, with 95 percent of participating seniors eligible to graduate.





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Time to Brush Up: A Lifetime of Great Dental Health Must Start Early

By Dr. Kwame Foucher, chief medical officer,
UnitedHealthcare of Illinois

Edited by Lawndale Bilingual Newspaper

Maintaining proper oral health matters more than just keeping a sparkling smile – it's also important for good overall health. That is especially true for children, as decay in baby teeth can lead to speech problems, oral infections and damaged adult teeth, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Tooth decay is largely preventable, yet it ranks as the most common chronic disease among children. About 33 percent of young kids (ages 2 to 8) have cavities in their baby teeth, and 20 percent of kids in the same age group have cavities in their adult teeth, according to the CDC. In Illinois, the state received a "D" grade for managing children's oral health based on key measures such as optimally fluoridated water and availability of school-based dental programs, according to The Pew Center on the States. February is National Children's Dental Health Month, a reminder that proper dental

health habits should start early for young people in Illinois and nationwide. To help maintain proper oral health among children, here are tips to consider:

For baby's teeth and gums:

- Never put a baby to bed with a bottle of milk, formula, fruit juice or sweetened liquid. When these liquids pool in a baby's mouth, they form a sugary film on the baby's teeth, leading to decay and infection.
- Starting at birth, clean the baby's gums with water and a soft cloth or child-sized tooth brush. Once a child reaches age 2, parents can start brushing a baby's teeth with a soft bristled toothbrush and a smear-sized dab of fluoride toothpaste (no larger than a grain of rice), making sure to teach the toddler to spit out the toothpaste.
- Schedule the baby's first dental visit when the first tooth comes in, usually between the child's first six to 12 months.

For children's teeth and gums:

- Help your child brush twice a day with a small amount of fluoride toothpaste; for children ages 3 to 6, this



means a pea-sized dab. Make sure your child does not swallow toothpaste, which may expose them to too much fluoride.

- Begin flossing when back teeth begin to come in. Toothbrush bristles cannot reach between teeth, leaving those teeth vulnerable to bacteria and decay.
- Limit sugary snacks and drinks between meals. When sugar comes in contact with teeth, decay-causing bacteria can produce acids that damage your child's teeth. Encourage children to eat healthy snacks, such as fruits and vegetables.

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