

Most children surveyed couldn't tell real guns from toy guns

2 November 2018

Firearms," will be presented on Monday, Nov. 5, during the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) 2018 National Conference & Exhibition in Orlando, Fla.

"One of the most dramatic findings was how easily caregivers and children can confuse real guns with today's realistic-looking toy guns," said Kiesha Fraser Doh, MD Assistant Professor of Pediatrics and Emergency Medicine Physician at Emory University School of Medicine. "Especially considering gun owners surveyed were nearly twice as likely as non-gun owners to let their children play with toy guns, safe storage of firearms in homes where children play is critical."

For the study, Fraser Doh and her colleagues surveyed 297 caregiver-child pairs visiting one of three pediatric emergency departments —2 suburban and 1 urban—in the southeastern United States. over a three -month period in 2017. Gun owners represented 25 percent of respondents, and they were significantly more likely to be white, have an annual income of greater than \$50,000, and some college education, compared with non-gun owners. Gun owners were also more likely to allow their child to play with toy guns, (51 percent, compared with 26 percent of non-gun owners).

In addition to asking about toy guns, the researchers asked all the caregivers how easily they thought their child could access a real gun. Few caregivers (5 percent, overall) felt their child could obtain a gun within 24 hours. However, results show that 14 percent of the children whose caregivers owned guns and 4 percent of children whose caregivers didn't own a gun, said they could access a gun within a day.

Among the study's firearm owners, most recruited from the suburban hospitals, fewer than half (34percent) stored their gun locked, unloaded, and separate from ammunition as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). In addition,

Table 1

Table 1. Descriptive Summary of Participants, N=297							
N (%)	Suburban Hospital #1 N=98	Suburban Hospital #2 N=98	Urban Hospital N=101	P	Gun Present n=74	No Gun n=223	P
Caregiver Characteristics							
Age <45 yrs. (>40)	55 (56%)	45 (46%)	70 (69%)	0.0037	43 (58%)	127 (57%)	0.89
Female	70 (72%)	75 (77%)	83 (82%)	0.06	59 (80%)	136 (61%)	0.0258
Some college education or higher (vs. no college)	68 (69%)	86 (88%)	61 (60%)	0.0001	61 (82%)	154 (69%)	0.0258
Household income >\$50K (vs. <\$50K)	58 (59%)	72 (73%)	21 (21%)	<0.0001	55 (74%)	96 (43%)	<0.0001
Ethnicity (selected all that apply)							
White	93 (94%)	65 (66%)	2 (2%)		45 (61%)	61 (27%)	
Hispanic/Latino	9 (9%)	12 (12%)	3 (3%)		4 (5%)	20 (9%)	
Black/African American	51 (52%)	23 (23%)	93 (92%)		27 (37%)	140 (63%)	
American Indian	5 (5%)	8 (8%)	5 (5%)		5 (7%)	13 (6%)	
Other	38 (37%)	61 (62%)	2 (2%)	<0.0001	43 (58%)	56 (25%)	<0.0001
White only (vs. Non-White)	38 (37%)	61 (62%)	2 (2%)	<0.0001	43 (58%)	56 (25%)	<0.0001
Child Participant Characteristics							
Female	51 (52%)	48 (49%)	49 (49%)	0.87	30 (41%)	118 (53%)	0.07
Age (yrs)							
7-10	34 (33%)	37 (38%)	46 (46%)		30 (41%)	85 (38%)	
11-13	36 (35%)	29 (29%)	26 (26%)	0.28	21 (28%)	63 (28%)	0.91
14-17	32 (31%)	38 (37%)	30 (30%)		23 (31%)	75 (34%)	
Gun Exposure and Beliefs							
Child visits home with firearm present	26 (27%)	38 (39%)	7 (7%)	<0.0001	40 (54%)	31 (14%)	<0.0001
Asks if firearms are present in others' homes	35 (36%)	23 (23%)	29 (29%)	0.16	24 (33%)	63 (29%)	0.48
Frequently hears gunshots in neighborhood	15 (15%)	6 (6%)	34 (34%)	<0.0001	10 (14%)	45 (20%)	0.21
Child can play with TG	34 (35%)	46 (47%)	14 (14%)	<0.0001	37 (51%)	57 (26%)	<0.0001
Caregiver believes that							
Child can identify RG vs TG	72 (74%)	68 (69%)	52 (53%)	0.0036	63 (86%)	129 (58%)	<0.0001
Child can obtain a gun	9 (9%)	5 (5%)	1 (1%)	0.0315	8 (11%)	7 (3%)	0.0142
There should be a law requiring caregivers to store guns safely	86 (89%)	88 (89%)	75 (76%)	0.0098	63 (86%)	186 (84%)	0.66
There should be a legal penalty for caregivers if child encounters unsecured firearm	86 (89%)	85 (87%)	68 (69%)	0.0004	62 (85%)	177 (80%)	0.36
Child believes that							
They could obtain a gun today	7 (7%)	9 (9%)	3 (3%)	0.2	10 (14%)	9 (4%)	0.0034
They can identify RG vs TG	66 (68%)	85 (86%)	74 (76%)	0.0047	57 (79%)	168 (76%)	0.62
Child actually identified RG vs TG	39 (40%)	32 (33%)	49 (51%)	0.13	28 (39%)	92 (42%)	0.6

Comparative analysis between suburban and urban hospital and gun owners and non-gun owners.

Descriptive summary of participants. Credit: Keisha Fraser Doh

A new study found that a majority of parents and caregivers, including firearm owners, said they were confident their children could tell a real gun apart from a toy gun. The children themselves also said they thought they could recognize the difference. But when shown side-by-side photos of actual and fake (toy) firearms, only 41 percent of children between ages 7 and 17 years old identified both correctly.

The study abstract, "A Comparison of Parental Firearm Storage Patterns and Children's Access to

among children who reported having a gun in the home 53 percent knew where it was stored and 45 percent knew where ammunition was stored.

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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