

Do you believe health professionals have the right to question patients?

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As more gun shootings are occurring, the nation is torn in a debate about gun control. One side of the debate favors stricter gun laws in hopes of preventing more shootings while the other side consists of gun owners who oppose any restriction or inquiries on their firearms. Several states in the United States have proposed bills that would ban health professionals from questioning patients about firearm ownership, in defense that it's an intrusion to their Second Amendment right to bear arms. Health professionals have the right to question patients regarding their firearm ownership as it is a first amendment right, crucial to the doctor-patient relationship, and an effective accident prevention effort. Health professional must have the right to question patients about their possession of firearms as it is a First Amendment right.

The First Amendment states that all citizens have a right to freedom of speech. Proposed bills regarding physician inquiries to patients about firearms places restrictions on the physician's exchanges of information and any advice given (Cooke, 2012). Placing limitations on any form of communication between a health professional and patient clearly violates the First Amendment. In addition, the proposed bills would prevent any beneficial advice such as safety precautions from being discussed to the patient (Cooke, 2012). Restraints in conversations and discussions regarding health could negatively impact patients as they are denied the quality care they could potentially receive.

Supporters of the proposed bills claim it threatens their Second Amendment rights but they fail to realize that the physician's First Amendment right is directly being violated. Medical professionals have the right to question <https://assignbuster.com/do-you-believe-health-professionals-have-the-right-to-question-patients/>

patients about firearms as it is crucial to the physician-patient relationship. It is a physician's responsibility to discuss health risks with their patients and guns are a major risk. Dr. Pieters from the Massachusetts Medical Society states that these proposals don't allow physicians to practice to the fullest of their capabilities (Gulla, 2015). If laws about firearm questioning are passed, physicians could withhold important information to their patients in fear of violating laws.

For example, the Privacy of a Firearm Owner's Act that was introduced in Florida lists criminal penalties for physicians such as third-degree felonies and fines of up to five million dollars (Macias, 2012). In order for there to be a healthy and beneficial relationship between a physician and their patient there needs to be a mutual understanding that everything being done is to benefit the patient. Patients who support the proposed bills claim that they fear harassment and discrimination for owning weapons so they prefer not be questioned, but in reality the physician doesn't interfere with their right to bear arms, they only want to provide safety measures (Cooke, 2012). Health professionals have the right to ask patients questions about their firearm ownership as it is an effective prevention effort. Physicians ask about firearms to ensure they're safely in the hands of someone who can appropriately handle them. According to the American College of Physicians, firearm education has been proven to decrease the likelihood of unintentional injury or death.

If physicians don't address firearm safety with patients, it puts all members of the household at a health risk. Approximately 10, 000 children are killed or

injured by guns yearly which could be prevented if gun owners were informed about how to store and handle guns (Culp-Ressler, 2015).

Moreover, physicians should be aware of a patient's possession of a firearm to ensure they are stable enough to own one and they don't have a mental illness. Evidence indicates that the presence of weapons in a household is a risk factor for suicide (Cooke, 2012). If a physician were aware of an unstable patient having access to a firearm they would have the opportunity to take preventive measures to ensure the safety of their patient and others.

Supporters of the proposed bill claim may view inquiries as invasive and unnecessary but when the safety of patients and others are considered it's apparent that taking precautions is necessary to prevent accidents.

In retrospect, health professionals have the right to question patients regarding their firearm ownership as it is a first amendment right, crucial to the doctor-patient relationship, and an effective accident prevention effort. A fundamental responsibility of a physician is to advise their patient on preventative safety measures concerning their health and well-being. The bills proposed that ban physicians from discussing firearms with their patients do more harm good by not allowing them to practice at their full potential. .