



## Lethal Means Counseling by Physicians

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An *American Journal of Medicine* commentary proposed that suicide in the United States could be reduced if physicians counseled at-risk individuals and their families to temporarily store firearms so that they cannot be used for self-harm. The authors suggested that health and behavioral health care providers could provide information about the methods and benefits of temporarily storing guns to prevent suicide among people in emotional crisis and those who are struggling with PTSD, substance abuse, or other problems that may put them at risk of suicide. Clergy, firearms instructors, and gun retailers would also be well-suited to convey this information. They noted that lethal means counseling as a method of preventing suicide is supported by the research and that “many of the major successes in reducing suicide in other countries have had little to do with improving mental health,” but are based on reducing access to lethal means. These successes include the change to carbon monoxide-free gas for cooking in Britain and restrictions on the sale of pesticides in Sri Lanka.

Barber, C., Hemenway, D., & Miller, M. (2016). How physicians can reduce suicide—without changing anyone’s mental health. *The American Journal of Medicine*, 129(10), 1016–1017.

For more information on lethal means counseling to prevent suicide, see these SPRC resources:

- [Common Ground: Reducing Gun Access](#) [1]: A powerful video about how gun shops in N.H. help prevent suicide
- [Counseling on Access to Lethal Means \(CALM\)](#): [2] An online course that helps providers develop effective safety plans for people at risk
- [Reduce Access to Means of Suicide](#) [3]: A collection of resources on preventing suicide by reducing access to lethal means

### Links within this resource

[1] <http://www.sprc.org/video/reducing-access-to-means>

[2] <http://www.sprc.org/resources-programs/calm-counseling-access-lethal-means>

[3] <http://www.sprc.org/comprehensive-approach/reduce-means>

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# Suicide Prevention Resource Center

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