MISSOURI: One Patient at a Time, This Wash U Program Works to Reduce Gun Suicides

March 23, 2018
News Type: Weekly Spark, Weekly Spark News
State: Missouri

A Washington University program is working to prevent firearm suicide. Located at the Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis, the program trains research coordinators in Counseling on Access to Lethal Means (CALM). The CALM training provides online instruction in helping patients at risk of suicide limit access to lethal methods, such as guns and medications. During an in-person assessment, the research coordinator and patient come up with a plan for temporarily storing guns outside of the home—for example, at a gun range or a friend's home. A few days after the patient has been discharged from the hospital, the research coordinator follows up to provide additional support. Washington University launched the program in December and will conduct an assessment at the end of this year to determine whether to continue long-term. Kristen Mueller, a Barnes-Jewish Hospital emergency department physician and CALM coordinator, said she hopes the program will help spread awareness that mental health issues are not a sign of weakness. “Many people are perfectly comfortable talking about child safety seats in their cars, talking about whether or not they wear their seatbelt, talking about whether they’re smoking or not smoking,” she said. “This is just another aspect of personal and public health.”

Spark Extra! Learn more about CALM [2].

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