

## AAP President: Academy Making Strides in Improving Health of Patients, Doctors

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**Editor's note:** *The 2017 AAP National Conference & Exhibition will take place from Sept. 16-19 in Chicago.*

The Academy is taking a stand to tackle gun violence, improve physician wellness and reform health care financing.

AAP President Fernando Stein, MD, FAAP, updated pediatricians on these efforts Saturday, calling attention to the “significant public health problem” of firearm-related violence that kills or injures 48 children and teens daily.

“Our patients are often silent about some of the many aspects they experience of violence,” he said. “There are many faces of violence.”

In 2015, the Academy joined other medical organizations and the American Bar Association in advocating for universal background checks for firearms, restrictions on the sale of assault weapons and elimination of laws preventing physicians from speaking with families about firearm safety.

Youths’ easy access to guns is especially troubling as it relates to suicide, Dr. Stein said.

“The presence of a firearm at home increases the risk of suicide even among those without a previous psychiatric diagnosis,” he said. “Remember the message here is teens seek permanent solutions to temporary problems.”

Suicide also has been a concern in recent years among physicians who are grappling with increased demands and experiencing burnout. About 400 physicians commit suicide each year, according to Dr. Stein. About 44% of pediatricians report burnout.

“Physicians are retiring early because of the endless pressures to achieve service efficiencies, to do more with less, and the realization that they have to spend two hours of computer time for every one hour of face time,” Dr. Stein said.

Initiatives are underway to improve time management in practice, promote work-life balance and assist with stress management. Dr. Stein said compassion is an “antidote for burnout” and should be a core value for health care organizations.

Among the ways the Academy is aiming to alleviate stress is working with the American Board of Pediatrics (ABP) to address member concerns about Maintenance of Certification (MOC). The ABP has increased ways to receive MOC credit and is piloting an online exam.

Another top priority for the Academy in recent months has been speaking out against proposed health care legislation in Congress that Dr. Stein said was “devoid of compassion” and would have stripped millions of people of their insurance coverage.

“Our health care system is not perfect, and there are reforms that should be pursued, especially those that reduce health care costs for individuals and practices,” he said. “We should all commit ourselves to pursuing public policy that improves people’s lives.”

*For more coverage of the AAP National Conference & Exhibition visit <http://bit.ly/2vm1VUU> and follow AAPNews on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).*