
ECSU prof participates in gun study

CLAIRE GALVIN

CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

WILLIMANTIC — Given that households with a gun present are at an increased risk for homicides, suicides and unintentional shootings, one local researcher is working to determine how to best encourage safe gun storage.

Mitchell Doucette, an Eastern Connecticut State University assistant professor in health sciences, was part of an award-winning research team that analyzed gun storage practices in U.S. homes.

Doucette conducted a nationally representative online survey about gun storage habits and attitudes about gun storage practices.

Self-inflicted and unintentional firearm injury is a major public health concern in the country, according to Doucette.

“Safe gun storage has the potential to serve as a meaningful intervention to reduce both gun-related injuries and fatalities,” said Doucette.

“Public health practitioners should utilize gun-safety training courses and partner with the groups that gun owners find credible, like law enforcement, to increase safe firearm storage.”

Doucette’s research explores the factors that influence firearm storage among gun owners.

Some methods for safe firearm storage include securing unloaded guns in a locked safe or gun rack and using trigger locks.

The study found only 50 percent of gun owners self-reported storing all of their firearms safely.

According to Doucette, having children increases the likelihood of safe firearm storage.

Doucette also found participating in gun-safety courses also increases safe firearm stor-

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age, a result he found most interesting.

“That’s a really great way for us to intervene,” Doucette said. “Some states require gun safety courses as part of getting a firearm. Requiring more courses as part of the process could be a good way to move forward.”

In addition to storage practices, the study also examined the organizations gun owners

view as credible sources of information about firearm storage.

According to the study, gun owners viewed law enforcement, military personnel, hunting/outdoor organizations and the NRA as most credible for communicating safe gun storage.

Doucette and his research team were recognized by the American Journal of Public Health for having one of the

best papers of the year in 2018.

The paper, titled “Storage Practices of U.S. Gun Owners in 2016,” was also selected for the journal’s editor’s choice awards.

Doucette said he first became interested in gun safety when he studied at John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

“We, as health science practitioners, are always try-

ing to promote health and promote safe firearm storage to reduce dangerous consequences of violence in the home,” Doucette said.

Doucette has been teaching at Eastern since September.

In the future, Doucette said he plans to research how guns are managed in homes with adults with dementia or Alzheimer’s disease.

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