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ECSU prof looks at workplace murders

Report: Most are no longer tied to robberies

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WILLIMANTIC — Mitchell Doucette, assistant professor of health sciences at Eastern Connecticut State University, recently published a paper about the changing trends of workplace homicides.

The study was in the research journal "Injury Epidemiology."

Doucette's paper is titled "Workplace homicides committed by firearm: recent trends and narrative text analysis" and was published March 18.

The paper looks at workplace homicides committed by firearm, focusing on trends from 2011-15, as well as possible motivations and circumstances.

The paper addresses research gaps in homicide literature by creating a comprehensive analysis of why workplace homicides are committed.

Doucette's research discovered, while overall workplace homicides have decreased, the motivations behind the fatalities have changed.

In previous years, intentional workplace deaths were largely caused by robberies, with 65 percent of workplace deaths in the late 1990s and early 2000s from robberies.

Now, workplace homicides — including intimate personal violence and mass shootings — are most often due to events such as interpersonal arguments, which could stem from work-performance criticism.

Because of this shift in motivations, Doucette contends there must be a shift in policy.

"Robbery-related prevention recommendations were fitting several decades ago.

when workplace homicides were most often a result of a robbery," Doucette said.

"As the circumstances of these crimes have shifted towards non-robbery events in recent years, so too must prevention techniques."

Access to firearms significantly increases the potential of lethality during an argument and Doucette reasons restricting workplace access to firearms may be a possible measure to reduce the number of workplace homicides.

"We suspect that the change in workplace-homicide circumstance, moving from robbery to non-robbery motivated crimes, may be in part due to an increase in firearm exposure," he concluded.

"Workers are now more likely than ever to interact with a customer or co-worker carrying a firearm."

In addition to being a professor at Eastern, Doucette is an affiliated research scientist with the Injury Prevention Center at Connecticut Children's Medical Center.

He was lead author for this paper and worked alongside Maria T. Bulzacchelli, Shannon Frattaroli and Cassandra K. Crifasi.

"Injury Epidemiology" is dedicated to advancing the scientific foundation for injury prevention and control through publication and dissemination of peer-reviewed research.

The publication's goal is to be the premier venue for communicating epidemiologic studies of unintentional and intentional injuries.

The journal has a special focus on studies generating practical knowledge that can be translated into interventions to reduce injury morbidity and mortality on a population level.

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