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## *Firearms are not a disease*

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**I**N A CURIOUS confluence of social activism and weird science, the federal government's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have been transformed. No longer concerned only with the traditional problems of infection control and public health, the new breed of CDC leaders sees as their righteous work the elimination of all noxious influences from the human experience.

The list of influences has increased in proportion to the investigators' zeal and budgets. Chief among the targets of CDC intervention is the nebulous category of "violence," which the CDC now considers a group of "diseases."

Violence, thus defined, includes: spousal abuse, wrongful homicide, assault, other violent crimes, and suicide. One of the most troubling new "ailments" targeted is gun ownership, which the CDC has labored to show is risky indeed.

From a sample of homicides among crime-prone subjects, Dr. Arthur Kellermann concluded in a CDC-funded study that even average citizens are at greater risk of homicide if there is a gun in the home. The sample-selection bias and politically motivated nature of Kellermann's work have been pointed out, but to no avail.

Millions of tax dollars have been spent in the CDC's expansion into violence treatment and prevention. In 1991 the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control was added to the CDC structure, with a subsidiary Division of Violence Prevention. Despite an enormous body of government and privately funded research in criminology, the NCIPC wants to do its own research.

For example, Director Mark Rosenberg, MD, complained that the question remains: How frequently are guns used successfully to ward off potentially violent attacks? This question has been exhaustively researched and answered by criminologists in at least eight independent studies over the last 20 years. The best estimates consistently have put the answer between 600,000 and 900,000 times per year. More recently Florida State University's Dr. Gary Kleck found a range of 1.2 to 2.4 million defensive uses per year.

### **Separate emotions from science**

Rosenberg and Division of Violence Prevention Director James Mercy, MD, may not be satisfied with this accumulated scientific evidence, because it flies in the face of their recommendations for restrictive licensing and outright prohibition of gun ownership.

Even if it were a suitable research topic for doctors of medicine, can we trust the CDC to have the rigorous objectivity required of true scientists? In a field of inquiry as laden with emotion and personal values as gun ownership, can the CDC's gun control advocates fulfill their absolute obligation to consider all the evidence, and not just what fits their political agenda? Not likely. Science in the service of politics has a poor record. We would be wise to keep them separate.

Congress should eliminate all funding for the CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. It is wasteful because it duplicates the work of other federal agencies. It is overbearing and arrogant in its urge to expand its influence in our lives beyond medical matters.

The CDC has occupied an honored place in our society as a seeker after truth. By association with the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, it abandons that place.



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