

In this issue: Violence

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I am pleased that the Delaware Academy of Medicine and the Delaware Public Health Association have dedicated this issue of the Delaware Journal of Public Health to the issue of violence in our state. The Delaware Department of Justice's primary responsibility with respect to violence is, of course, to prosecute persons charged with violent crimes. We have hundreds of people in our office who work tirelessly every day on these prosecutions, and I am honored to call them my colleagues.

Since taking office a little over 20 months ago, I have also tried to focus the attention of policymakers and the public on the prevention of violent crime. Some of that effort has been focused on enhancing community-based policing in the neighborhoods of our state most directly impacted by violence. But we have been equally committed to encouraging the state to focus more resources on the underlying causes of crime, by heightening investment in summer and after-school programs for children in low-income neighborhoods, public schools with large populations of students who live in poverty, drug treatment programs, and programs that help inmates successfully re-enter the community after serving prison sentences. I am grateful to have the vocal support of many members of the state's medical community in these efforts; as the people who often see and treat the victims of violent crime, some of our health care providers have been among the most passionate advocates for these efforts.

The responsible gun control laws enacted in Delaware that Eleanor Kiesel discusses in her article, the school-based health centers discussed by Lanae Ampersand and Joyce Persing, and the youth interventions discussed by David Chen, Iman Sharif, and Sandra Medinilla, are all important parts of the tapestry of efforts that are required if we are to reduce violent crime over the long run. Improved policing is a necessary, but not sufficient, part of making our state safer.

One additional area where the medical community can assist the state in reducing violence is by assisting the state in reducing the unnecessary prescription of opioid drugs. Any police chief in the state will tell you that a substantial amount of our state's violent crime is related to drug trafficking, and many of the persons in our state who suffer from substance use disorder and purchase those drugs began as recipients of prescription opioids. In the most recent comprehensive studies, Delaware continues to have one of the highest per capita opioid prescription rates in the country for long-term opioids and high-dosage opioids. I have been a vocal advocate for increased communication in our state between medical providers and their patients who receive opioid prescriptions, as well as increased monitoring of many patients who receive long term opioid prescriptions. I hope that our medical community will join this effort.

Once again, I appreciate the interest of the Delaware Academy of Medicine and the Delaware Public Health Association for this issue, and the interest of the state's entire medical community in making this a safer and more secure state.

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