

LETTERS

More on firearm injuries among children and youth

In your response¹ to a previous question² on this forum, and not reported in your original article,³ it now appears that 55.1% of unintentional firearm injuries came from BB guns and air guns. By comparison, only 5.6% came from long guns and 2.5% from handguns. Of the 36% not specified, there is no way of knowing whether they represented a similar breakdown, but if they did, then extrapolating to the full group, it would mean that perhaps 86% of the unintentional injuries came from BB guns and air guns.

Although you correctly quoted the definition of a firearm as “a barrelled weapon from which any shot, bullet or other projectile can be discharged and that is capable of causing serious bodily injury or death to a person, and includes any frame or receiver of such a barrelled weapon and anything that can be adapted for use as a firearm,” a perusal of these same regulations also shows that the Firearms Act states (section 84.3.d) that devices that do not produce projectiles with “a shot, bullet or other projectile at a muzzle velocity exceeding 152.4 m per second or at a muzzle energy exceeding 5.7 Joules” are “deemed not to be firearms,”

and this has a large impact on the laws regarding purchase, storage, transportation and use of the devices. Nearly all air guns and BB guns fall into this group.

The importance of the distinction is that devices in the latter group (which I will call pseudo-firearms) do not require licensing or registration, have no storage regulations and, in general, are purchased as a toy, not as a firearm in the sense that the public generally understands this word to imply.

Do you feel that it is reasonable to take data that overwhelmingly reported injuries by pseudo-firearms and use it to draw conclusions about and suggest national public policy on “real” firearms, when completely different laws regarding purchase, licensing, storage, and transportation govern these two different classes of items?

Furthermore, from the article, the rate of unintentional injury among individuals less than 15 years of age was about 25% of that among individuals 15 to 25 years. Given this and given that pseudo-firearms represented most of the unintentional injuries in this study, do you still feel that naming this article “Risk of firearm injuries among children and youth of immigrant families” truly represents the nature of what this report measured and documented? Do you feel that the

media in Canada used your paper in a manner that reflected the data you gathered with headlines that typically stated, one child is accidentally injured every day in Ontario by gun violence?⁴

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Competing interests: Gyl Midroni is a member of the Ontario Medical Association. He is a sports shooter and member of the Canadian Shooting Sports Association and Canadian Coalition for Firearms Rights.