

for preventing death and injury and for promoting human rights. Currently, efforts are fragmented and there is need for a framework to ensure co-ordinated and effective policy making.

Presentation of the participants, their title, role and interests (see list attached).

Background Presentations:

(9h30) Dr. Antoine Chapdelaine : " Public Health and Firearm Injury Prevention ", history and perspectives.

Historically, Public Health experts in Canada began addressing firearm-related deaths and injuries following a tragic national event in 1989 at Montréal's École Polytechnique, an event which brought to light the weaknesses of Canadian laws.

Attention focused on the "causes" of gun related violence is a relatively new phenomenon. It was only in 1983 that the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) declared firearm-related violence a public health hazard, to be studied with the same kinds of epidemiological tools applied to suspected toxins, bacteria, viruses or tobacco. The CDC funded a series of studies exploring the relationship between gun ownership, homicide rates, suicides and "accidental" deaths with firearms. Extensive research has established a correlation between access to guns and risk of death and injury . The mere presence of a firearm in a home increases the risk of suicide (4.8 times), of homicide (2.7 times) and of "accident", over a home where there are no guns. These and other studies make the link between access to firearms and increased rates of violent deaths. Such epidemiological knowledge is now the basis for the public health approach to prevent firearm related injury and death. As a well established Public Health strategy, prevention is best accomplished by first identifying, then breaking the causal chain of a disease or injury at its weakest link. The key elements in such a strategy for firearms is to control manufacturing and importation, acquisition and transfer, possession and finally, use.

There are also a number of international initiatives currently underway which we must consider. These include:

- OAS Convention
- UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice
- UN Small Arms Panel
- UN Register of Conventional Arms

The overarching goal of public health is always to prevent death and injury, notwithstanding the medical or legal circumstances of the occurrences or the means used. The question we must address is: what role should public health play?

(9h45) Wendy Cukier : " International Firearms and Small arms control." Finding the common ground "

There were three critical perspectives identified for small arms control internationally as well as for gun control domestically: peace building, crime prevention, public health.

The public health perspective is critical in linking the other two. It has as its overriding objective, the prevention of firearm injury and death regardless of the context. It views firearms/.small arms as instruments causing bodily harm. From a public health perspective, the mere presence of a firearm increases the risk of the occurrence of an incident and also the lethality of the outcome.

Viewed from this perspective, we recognise that the problems vary with the context if we consider, for example, deaths and injuries among particular target populations (children/youth, women, men, all) and the context (conflict, homicide, suicide, unintentional injury, other crime) in some contexts, such as in South African, crime and conflict are inseparable - in some contexts, for example in Canada, the main problem with firearms is suicide (largely among youth) and - there is also a gender dimension (while women are often the victims of guns, firearm owners are mostly men).