

A Public Health Approach

An Interview with Jose M. Prince,

Director, Laboratory of Pediatric Injury and Inflammation, Feinstein Institutes' Center for Immunology and Inflammation, Northwell Health

EDITORS' NOTE Dr. Jose Prince is a practicing pediatric surgeon and focuses on translational research directed at understanding and regulating the injury response of children. A native of Queens, New York, Prince was recruited from the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center to join the founding faculty of the Zucker School of Medicine in 2010. He completed both his general surgery and pediatric surgery training in Pittsburgh. In addition, he completed a three-year post-doctoral research fellowship at the University of Pittsburgh studying the innate immune response to injury. Prince attended Yale University School of Medicine and was awarded a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Research Fellowship, which he completed at the National Institutes of Health under the guidance of Dr. John Hanover in the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. Prince is a member of various international and national societies, including the American College of Surgeons, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Pediatric Surgical Association, Shock Society, Surgical Infection Society, Association for Academic Surgery, International Pediatric Endosurgery Group, Society of American Gastrointestinal and Endoscopic Surgeons, and the New York Surgical Society. He serves as a guest reviewer for a number of scientific publications. In addition, Prince is a mentor for postdoctoral fellows, graduate students and undergraduate students within his lab. He has authored more than 80 scientific reports, articles, and chapters.



Jose M. Prince

Will you provide an overview of Northwell's Center for Gun Violence Prevention and how you define its mission?

The Center for Gun Violence Prevention is charting a public health approach to end the epidemic of gun violence. Our mission is to eliminate gun violence as the leading cause of death in children and adolescents in the United States by developing and implementing firearm injury and mortality prevention strategies as part of routine healthcare. The Center was established in 2020 as a result of Michael Dowling's call to action as a direct response to the litany of shooting deaths and injuries across our region and America. Our goal is to challenge healthcare leaders to see this as a public health issue which they have the power and responsibility to address.

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Will you highlight your role and areas of focus at Northwell?

First, I am a physician who found purpose in helping children as a pediatric general and thoracic surgeon using minimally invasive advanced surgical techniques. As a surgeon-scientist, I have focused my basic science research on the injury response in collaboration with Dr. Ping Wang at Feinstein. This work led to my first program leadership role as the Trauma Medical Director at Cohen Children's Medical Center (CCMC) and my efforts in pediatric trauma system development and injury prevention within Northwell, New York State, and globally. More recently, I have the privilege of leading the pediatric general and thoracic surgery division and serving as the Surgeon-in-Chief of CCMC.

What do you feel are the keys to driving change in addressing gun violence prevention?

A key aspect in driving change is to reframe the discussion to move past the polarized and frozen status quo. This is not about the second amendment. This is about tackling a major health crisis in our country. To this end, Northwell has organized an annual forum with thought leaders, community leaders, healthcare and business leaders to work in partnership to advance a shared conversation. An international learning

collaborative led by our Center has brought the full breadth of over 600 stakeholders together to share best practices and to learn from each other. Dr. Chethan Sathya, the Director of the Center, is a tireless advocate for a public health approach to ending gun violence. His NIH-funded research studies universal firearm injury risk screening performed in the emergency departments of multiple Northwell emergency departments, including CCMC. As a result of his work, the center co-sponsored a National Academies of Sciences, Engineering & Medicine (NASEM) Workshop focused on integrating firearm injury prevention strategies in healthcare settings. Recently, Mr. Dowling has convened a CEO council of the major health systems of the U.S. to further build upon the momentum to unify healthcare's response to this crisis.

Guns are now the leading cause of death among children and adolescents. What do you say to lawmakers and public officials about the need to address this issue as a public health crisis?

We have no time to waste. Lawmakers and public officials must rally together to fund research, support violence prevention programs, and organize government resources to prioritize this public health crisis. When the modern Eisenhower interstate highway system was built in the U.S., it led to motor vehicle collisions as a leading cause of death of Americans. Smoking was a major cause of suffering and death for Americans until public health advocates and litigation forced a public accounting. Polio, COVID, and influenza have ravaged our country over the last 100 years. By organizing our efforts, we have overcome all of these public health crises in the past. We must rise to the challenge that firearm injury and gun violence present to our children and the future we leave our grandchildren.

Is it hard to be patient when you look at the slow progress being made in addressing gun violence prevention?

As a pediatric surgeon, my daily work draws me to look to the future. Each operation or procedure is performed in the hopes of a better tomorrow for that child. We have made some progress with our efforts. Ultimately, I know we will overcome this challenge. We can't accept that guns will be the leading cause of death for our children – our children and youth don't accept it now, and our grandchildren should see it as a problem of the past. Each of us has a responsibility to make that the future for them. ●