

MSDC Statement on Violence and Physician Speech

November 21, 2018

The Medical Society of the District of Columbia (MSDC) recognizes that violence is a public health issue that affects our city's health care professionals. Every day physicians and their health care teams deal with the physical, emotional, and mental toil that violence takes on our patients. Recently, a social media campaign telling physicians they do not have a place in the gun control debate, plus the terrible shooting at the Chicago hospital, compels us to share our policies on the issues of medical workplace safety.

First, MSDC defends the right of all physicians to speak out on advocacy issues that impact the health of our citizens. Whether it is saying #ThisIsOurLane or sharing opinions on public health from a medical perspective, physicians should speak on general patient safety issues. (MSDC Policy 65.003)

In addition, MSDC reiterates its long-held position against violence of any sort against medical facilities and health care professionals. The protection of those who care for our patients is an utmost concern and high priority for MSDC. (MSDC Policy 65.002)

Finally, MSDC offers its members' expertise to the DC government on the issue of violence, especially gun violence and medical facility safety. As the Council and Bowser Administration continue to examine how to best reduce the number of deaths by gun violence, MSDC certainly is ready to offer its members' views as a medical, scientific resource.

In the coming months, MSDC will be speaking with stakeholders in the healthcare community to define a consensus path forward on the issues of medical facility safety and reducing the number of victims of violence. The MSDC Board of Directors encourages District physicians to share their thoughts with us so our policies are nuanced, effective, and representative.