Plenary Contribution to IPPNW Conference “Aiming for Prevention: International Medical Conference on Small Arms, Gun Violence, and Injury.”
Helsinki, Finland, 28-30 September 2001

Chair’s introduction

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One of the principal goals of this conference is to frame the small arms problem as a medical and public health issue. One of the best indicators of whether an issue has come to the attention of the medical profession is the number and quality of articles that appear in medical journals. Conversely, the journals themselves are the principle educational tool for health professionals. Etienne Krug and others during the last day or so have talked about the inadequacy of available data and the lack of material being presented through journals. The need for research data and the need for preventive strategies, and I think there’s no doubt that that’s so. On the other hand, there is already a good deal of research and commentary being published in medical journals throughout the world. To test this out I did a simple PubMed search on the word “firearms.” Actually I did one on “small arms” and came up with almost nothing. 10 or 12 articles, many of which looked suspiciously like medical articles about problems with the human arm. But when I changed the search term to “firearms” I came up with about 2,100 articles published over the last 10 years in a very large variety of journals. Among the journals that had published articles on small arms injuries and firearms-related social problems, just during the last year or two, include the Journal of the American Medical Association, the British Medical Journal, the New England Journal of Medicine, the Lancet, Annals of Internal Medicine, the Bulletin of the WHO, the ICRC Review, Annals of Emergency Medicine, American Journal of Emergency Medicine, the American Journal of Public Health, Military Medicine, the Journal of Forensic Science, the Journal of Social Psychology, the Journal of Public Health Policy, the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, Injury, Injury Prevention, Pediatrics, the Bulletin of the American College of Surgeons, Environmental Health Perspectives, the World Medical Journal, International Journal of Legal Medicine, the Journal of Trauma, the Journal of Law and Medical Ethics, Epidemiology, the Australia/New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, the Croatian Journal of Public Health, and of course our own journals Medicine and Global Survival, and Medicine, Conflict and Survival. That’s not even a comprehensive list. That’s just sort of a snapshot of where things have been published in the last couple of years.

I thought you might also be interested in a selection of recent titles that have been published over the last year or two, that show the range of research interests and policy connections that journal editors already recognize on these issues that we’re concerned with here. So some titles: gun violence, exposure and trauma among rural youth. Firearms and suicide; guns killing our children – a status report; a population based study
So these are the research-based articles. Then there are some that appear to deal with strategy and advocacy: “Preventing firearm injuries; medical societies unite against firearm injuries; UN takes aim at small arms; beyond treating the wounds-the physician’s role in preventing gun violence.”

So just looking at that brief and very unscientific and non-comprehensive survey of what medical journals have been publishing over the last couple of years shows us that there is an interest among journal editors in these issues, and that there are opportunities not only to get research-based articles published, but also to get some things into journals that are more commentary based that present a point of view and perhaps propose some recommendations for advocacy, all of which are of great interest to us here this weekend.

So with that introduction, I’d like to turn the panel over to Dr. Marusic and then to Dr. Holdstock and Dr. Piachaud