As Lawrence will reveal in a forthcoming paper, to be exhaustive, searches of at least two databases will be needed.¹⁰ Another answer is to persuade our competitors to drop out and leave the field exclusively to *Injury Prevention*. Not a bad idea, but not too likely. More promising is the prospect of non-profit journals like this one forming alliances with its cousins, at least at the level of on-line publication. Watch this space closely.

PEER REVIEW AND OPEN ACCESS

Finally, I would be remiss to conclude an editorial entitled unfinished business without some reference to the hottest topic most editors struggle with—peer review, and its cousin, open-access publishing.¹⁰ Several studies in the BMJ and elsewhere have examined peer review, revealing many imperfections.^{11–12} In spite of these findings, I remain a believer. For all its warts, peer review serves a variety of goals reasonably well. But I am

convinced that we must improve the process in this journal and elsewhere. Does that mean adopting the open access argument that web viewers will prove to be the best judges of the worthiness of a paper?¹³ For the present, I think not but the idea is intriguing.

The moral argument of the open-access movement is compelling: that all publicly funded research should be freely available to all. The potentially cataclysmic effects of this movement on scientific publishing is an element of new business that all future editors will need to address.

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Gun control

Gun control US style: one small step

I B Pless

Strict regulation is essential at gun shows to curb criminal activity

In light of the shooting deaths of 32 people in April at a US university, Virginia Tech, I felt compelled to include the paper by Wintemute¹ in this issue (see page 150). To my way of thinking, this study represents a small but critical step towards truly effective gun control in a country where the culture of guns verges on the incomprehensible. Although there is no evidence that the deranged shooter obtained his guns from a gun show (do all countries have them?), the implications for prevention seem evident.

I was prompted to write this brief editorial because the author plays down his findings. Wintemute calmly concludes, "California's regulatory policies were associated with a decreased incidence of anonymous, undocumented gun sales and illegal 'straw purchases' at gun

shows." That this is too quiet an understatement becomes evident when you examine the striking comparisons in table 2. They reveal the greatly increased risks of deadly weapons being sold at shows in states that lack California's regulations. Even in the US it seems odd to permit undocumented gun sales while fussing about undocumented immigrants. Wintemute's findings, combined with what has been shown about the value of having background checks on all gun transfers, are clear evidence of the effectiveness of regulations in this area—as in most others. It is reasonable to assume that measures that reduce "anonymous, undocumented" and "illegal 'straw purchases'" would also reduce the chances of these weapons falling into the hands of Virginia Tech-style killers.

Why such measures are resisted even after this massacre is the US way of addressing gun control. As an editorial in the *New York Times* (April 2007) noted: "We might ask why Virginia's Legislature has decided to protect some of its shadier gun dealers from being unmasked. But, unfortunately, we already know the answer: more craven service to the all-powerful gun lobby." The editorial concludes, "The horror of tens of thousands of annual gun deaths will be compounded if the new crop of presidential candidates manages to duck an issue that more than 200 mayors, led by Mr Bloomberg, are fighting from the trenches."

Make that 200 mayors, too few researchers, and at least one editor.

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