

Episode: *Author Interview: “How Should We Approach Faculty Who Create Hostile Learning Environments for Underrepresented Students and Trainees?”*

Guest: J. Corey Williams, MD, MA

Host: Tim Hoff

Transcript by: Cheryl Green

[Access the podcast.](#)

[bright theme music]

[00:00:04] TIM HOFF: Welcome to another episode of the Author Interview series from the *American Medical Association Journal of Ethics*. I’m your host, Tim Hoff. This series provides an alternative way to access the interesting and important work being done by Journal contributors each month. Joining me on this episode is Dr J. Corey Williams, a child and adolescent psychiatrist and assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatry at Medstar-Georgetown University Hospital in Washington, DC, where he is a co-director of recruitment, retention, and climate. He’s here to discuss his article, coauthored with Drs Ashley Andreou and Susan Cheng, “*How Should We Approach Faculty Who Create Hostile Learning Environments for Underrepresented Students and Trainees?*,” in the January 2024 issue of the Journal, [Critical Pedagogies in Health Professions Education](#). Dr Williams, thank you so much for being on the podcast. [music fades]

DR J. COREY WILLIAMS: Thank you so much for having me.

[00:00:57] HOFF: So, to begin with, what’s the main ethics point that you and your coauthors are making in your article?

WILLIAMS: Yeah, I guess I would distill it down, if I had to distill it down into one central point, which is just the importance of establishing cultures that have multiple levels of accountability, including self-accountability, especially for leaders within academic institutions and teaching hospitals. We bring up this point about the sort of growing problem around student and trainee mistreatment and abuse, and it’s been a problem for decades and a problem that we are becoming more and more aware of over the last few years. And I think that we all need to take some form of accountability for this problem, and we all contribute to this problem in some way. And especially if you have some sort of institutional authority, you really need to be thinking about your contributions to the workplace culture, how you can shape the policies and practices to be more equitable and inclusive and establish multi-layered and multilevel systems of accountability, including sort of performance reviews for your teaching faculty among many levels.

[00:02:20] HOFF: And so, what’s the most important thing for the health professions students and trainees who are reading this to take from your article?

WILLIAMS: Yeah, good question. I think from a student’s perspective or a trainee’s perspective, I think they’re already beginning to do this and certainly don’t need my article to do this. But start, I think, start having higher expectations and demanding more of us as teaching faculty from the standpoint of creating more equitable and diverse and inclusive learning environments. As I said, I think part of the reason why this problem has kind of risen to national attention in the last few years is multifactorial. But one of the things is that our student and trainee cohorts are becoming more diverse over time and starting to encounter systems that have not historically

been welcoming to historically underrepresented groups. And I think that there's, we're at kind of a watershed moment where our students and trainees are starting to demand more of us as teachers, not just in the quality of our content and how good we are as teachers, but how are we constructing the learning environment? And are we making learning environments that are...that allow for every student and trainee to feel like they're important, respected members of the team, that they have an important voice, and bring a valuable perspective to the team? And so, how we do that is becoming really important. So, from a student and trainee perspective, I would just have them keep doing what they've been doing, which is keep demanding more and keep having high expectations for your teachers and instructors. [theme music returns]

[00:04:15] HOFF: Dr Williams, thank you so much for your time on the podcast today, and thanks to you and your coauthors for your contribution to the Journal this month.

WILLIAMS: Okay. Thank you so much for your time. I appreciate it.

HOFF: To read the full article as well as the rest of this month's issue for free, visit our site, [journalofethics.org](http://journalofethics.org). We'll be back soon with more *Ethics Talk* from the *American Medical Association Journal of Ethics*.