

Episode: *Author Interview: "The American Medical Association on the Ethics of Vivisection, 1880-1950"*

Guest: Jorie Braunold, MLIS

Host: Tim Hoff

Transcript: Cheryl Green

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[bright theme music]

[00:00:03] 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 Jorie Braunold, the archivist for the American Medical Association in Chicago, Illinois. She's here to discuss her article, "*The American Medical Association on the Ethics of Vivisection, 1880-1950*," in the September 2024 issue of the Journal, [Nonhuman Animal Research](#). Jorie, thank you so much for being back on the podcast. [music fades]

JORIE BRAUNOLD: Thank you for having me.

[00:00:41] HOFF: So, what is the main ethics point of this article?

BRAUNOLD: I think the questions being raised in the 1800s about using animals in medical experiments are still relevant in terms of our ongoing ethical debates. Some arguments are relatively settled, though still hotly debated in some corners, like if wearing leather is ethical or morally acceptable, and if we've settled on that as a nation. Whereas with issues like sacrificing a lesser good for a greater good and encountering a moderate evil to escape a greater evil, this is not settled by any means. Probably never will be. We can see this in the debates over voting and whether or not to vote for a candidate that's the, quote, "lesser of two evils." And then there are the arguments put forth by the AMA at the time that are just not even really worthy of debate. For instance, that doctors, simply by choosing to be healers, are beyond reproach morally: How could someone dedicated to saving lives be unethical? And I think we've seen by now that those two things are not mutually exclusive. Unethical doctors obviously do exist and always have. But I would say that many of the basic questions of how we justify possible harm to animals in any situation are still in contention.

[00:01:51] HOFF: And so, what's the most important thing for health professions students and trainees to take from your article?

BRAUNOLD: So, I guess I would hope that students and trainees can look at this list of ethical justifications for the use of animals in medical testing and sort of reflect on their own beliefs. What resonates with them? What does it mean for their career? This is obviously especially important for those going into the medical research field, but I think everyone who works in health could probably take some time to think about why they do

what they do, what beliefs they have that may shape their actions or choice of career, and whether or not they're living up to those beliefs. This is obviously probably true for all people and all professions, but in the case of medical testing on animals specifically, it is particularly relevant to those in the health care field.

[00:02:36] HOFF: And finally, if you could add a point to your article that you didn't have the time or space to fully explore, what would that be?

BRAUNOLD: Something that I found really interesting was how much this topic overlapped with two controversial issues in the present: the anti-abortion movement and the anti-vax movement. In the late 19th and 20th century, the organizations that were protesting against vivisection were also concerned with vaccination, and they generally viewed the medical field as immoral and suspect. On the other hand, the medical establishment, while they were championing anti-abortion measures and arguing in favor of vivisection, were using the language of ethics and morals. And it was these issues that really cemented their standing as the true face of healing, the moral, the legitimate healers. So, I think it's interesting that in the public square, you don't hear that much about animal testing for medical purposes anymore, but these two other issues are still very much in hot debate and aren't really tied together in the discourse anymore. [theme music returns]

[00:03:34] HOFF: Jorie, thank you so much for your time on the podcast, and thanks, as always, for your contribution to the Journal.

BRAUNOLD: Thank you.

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*.