

Episode: *Editorial Fellow Interview: “Why Should We Care About What Using Nonhuman Animals in Human-Centered Research Suggests About Our Characters?”*

Guest: Bethany M. Erb

Host: Tim Hoff

Transcript: Cheryl Green

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[bright theme music]

[00:00:03] TIM HOFF: Welcome to another episode of the Editorial Fellow 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 Bethany M. Erb, a medical student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Medicine and Public Health with a path of distinction in bioethics and research. Beth is the editorial fellow who curated the September 2024 issue of the Journal, [Nonhuman Animal Research](#). Beth, thank you so much for being on the podcast.

BETHANY ERB: Thanks for having me, Tim. It's great to be here. [music fades]

[00:00:41] HOFF: So, what's the main ethics point, if you could pull one out, of your issue?

ERB: Yeah. So, our issue, the main point is that protecting other species can be one of the most paradoxically powerful ways to protect our own species, and this issue is examining the utility of nonhuman animal-based research as it is currently practiced. And so, we have a fantastic array of philosophers and ethicists and scientists exploring what nonhuman animal-based research looks like now and how we might streamline that process in the future to improve the preclinical research pathway and to be ethical stewards of the nonhuman animals that we use in research.

[00:01:30] HOFF: And so, what's the most important thing for your fellow health professions students and trainees to take from this article?

ERB: I think what is important to know is the COVID-19 pandemic exposed how vulnerable we can be to new viruses and to help public health changes that require a very rapid research pathway. And we have the new need to accelerate drug development. And as it stands, nonhuman animal use and research is often very bulky and cumbersome. And what I mean by that is the stress, the metabolic stress, that animals experience in research can often lead to poor outcomes, poor translatability of animal research to humans and drug effects in humans, for example. And so, it's not enough for us to really sit back and wait for the next pandemic to occur before we start thinking about new ways to protect our patients from unknown threats, and how examining, critically examining, the research pathway involving nonhuman animals as it

stands can help be part of that way to make research better and more useful in the future.

[00:02:45] HOFF: And finally, what would you like to bring particular attention to, to readers as they work through this issue?

ERB: So, this issue is profoundly optimistic because while it might seem like nonhuman animal use is very far removed from the primary care clinic or the OR where you might have your research as a listener, or your work as a listener, we know that many of medicine's great breakthroughs, from vaccines to germ theories, come from the laboratory. And so, exploring the potential to innovate and to develop new ways of doing preclinical research and being ethical stewards as preclinical research administrators gives us the chance to create a better medical frontier for future patients. [theme music returns]

[00:03:37] HOFF: Beth, thanks for being on the podcast today, and thanks for your help in curating this month's issue.

ERB: Thanks for having me, Tim. It's great to talk about it with 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*.