

Episode: *Author Interview: “How Should We Advance Sleep Stewardship?”*

Guest: Jeremy A. Gallegos, PhD

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 Dr Jeremy A. Gallegos, tenured professor of philosophy and ethics at Friends University in Wichita, Kansas. He's here to discuss his article, “*How Should We Advance Sleep Stewardship?*,” in the October 2024 issue of the Journal, [Sleep Stewardship](#). Dr Gallegos, thank you so much for being on the podcast. [music fades]

DR JEREMY GALLEGOS: Thank you. Tim, I appreciate being asked to be here.

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

GALLEGOS: The main point that I have struggled with in terms of when I look at research, consider sleep as a basic human function, is that most of our language is predicated upon personal responsibility: “That is on you. You figure out how you get to sleep. You manage your time. You manage your sleep hygiene.” Yet, we're sort of in a crisis of how little sleep we're getting. The rise of use of melatonin, the things that we see every day regarding blue screens, red shifting your screens. And oddly, there's no sort of discussion regarding what anyone else owes you to help you attain better sleep habits, improve sleep hygiene. And almost, there's almost language like this around rights in access to health care. It's the same thing. If you can't have access to quality accommodations for sleep, that may even be a problem for human rights.

[00:01:49] HOFF: And so, what do you see as the most important thing for health professions students and trainees specifically to take from your article?

GALLEGOS: Well, I think there's two things. One of them, quite obviously, is that people in the health professions themselves should be practicing good personal sleep hygiene and habits. But I think that has been problematic since at least, and likely before, the pandemic for clinicians and health care professionals, and I think we've seen that to be tied to issues of burnout and mental distress at work. So I think number one, they should practice this. Number two is, at the very least, advocate education and awareness of the importance of sleep when they're dealing with patients. Or even in my case, I tell my students, I tell my own daughters, “This is important. It's really important in terms of how you function as a human being, for your own mental well-being and personal well-being.”

[00:02:47] HOFF: And finally, if you could add a point to your article that you didn't have the time or the space to fully explore, what would that be?

GALLEGOS: Sure. I have kind of an odd take. Friends University is a Christian liberal arts university, and about eight years ago we had a professor on campus who led a workshop that he titled *Sleep as a Form of Worship*, which I found to be a very interesting title. But it sort of affirmed Jean-Paul Sartre's view that we as human beings have a desire to be God, and what is the byproduct of that belief system is that we don't like giving up control. We want to do everything ourselves. So if that means we stay up later to do more work, we'll do that. And if it means we get up earlier on top of that to do more work or to fit more things into our day, we will do that as well. And I would sort of self-profess that at that moment when I went to that workshop, I was only getting about six hours of sleep myself. So it really sort of kind of convicted me to rethink this. And right now I'm happy to report I have much better sleep habits at 7 to 8 hours routinely. [theme music returns] So, that one's a little bit of far afield in terms of the cultural perspective, but I thought it was interesting.

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

GALLEGOS: I appreciate that. Thank you, Tim.

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