

Episode: *Author Interview: “Why Is Hospice One of the Few Health Care Environments Structured for Peace?”*

Guest: Grayson Holt, MSW, MA

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 Grayson Holt, a medical student at Harvard Medical School in Boston, Massachusetts, and the co-editorial fellow who helped curate this month’s issue of the Journal. He’s here to discuss his article, coauthored with Dr Johanna Glaser, “*Why Is Hospice One of the Few Health Care Environments Structured for Peace?*,” in the November 2024 issue of the Journal, [Peace in Health Care](#). Grayson, thank you for being back on the show.

GRAYSON HOLT: Thanks for having me. Really excited to talk. [music fades]

[00:00:46] HOFF: So, what is the main ethics point that you and your coauthor are making in this article?

HOLT: So I think the key ethics point that Dr Glaser and I were hoping to pull out in our article is that we have an ethical obligation to design towards peace in how we create and design hospitals and hospital architecture. We wanted to draw out that it’s not just the nice thing to do or the kind thing to do to design spaces that reflect the humanity of the people that we care for, but that it also contributes to better outcomes and better care overall. And we wanted to argue that how we design is ultimately a reflection of our values, and also, that it’s not all or nothing. We noted that the surgical suite has different design needs than the primary care office, yet we were hoping to further explore how these different settings can create more spaces for humanity, the expression of patients, and ultimately, dignity.

[00:01:48] HOFF: And so, what do you think is the most important thing for your fellow health professions students and trainees to take from your article?

HOLT: So, something that Dr Glaser had noted when we were working on this article was that the case commentary, the patient referencing that they desired a more peaceful setting of care, struck her ear as somewhat rare. And what she meant by that was that it’s not that patients don’t want a peaceful and humane environment, it’s that they kind of aren’t looking for it anymore, that they’ve in some way given up. And so, I think one of the key takeaways as we practice is to look for opportunities to make the setting of care more peaceful, more personalized, and to keep an ear open to how

patients communicate that that is a desire they have, even if it's not as direct as the patient in the case commentary.

[00:02:39] HOFF: And finally, if you could add a point to this article that you didn't have the time or the space to fully explore, what would that be?

HOLT: So, there was a portion of the paper that we ultimately did not have sufficient room for, and that was in the context of metaphors in medicine. So, we spoke a lot about regulations, the potential influence of private equity, or organizational structure, and even the mission of palliative and hospice care as forces influencing whether or not settings of care are designed towards peace. And what we would've loved to include is how metaphors can shape the obligations and the values of medicine. So, we did a lot of work reading Victoria Sweet, who was a physician who's written about different metaphors, such as seeing the body as a broken machine and the physician as a mechanic, which can lead to these rather sterile settings of care with little humanity. And instead, Dr Sweet has written about the body as a garden and the physician as a gardener who removes impediments to the natural healing force of the body. And if we would've had some more room, we would've explored further about how these metaphors call different obligations and different ideas about where we have space for humane, dignifying design. [theme music returns]

[00:03:57] HOFF: Grayson, thank you so much for being on the podcast today, and thank you for your contribution to the Journal this month, both as coauthor of this article and as co-editorial fellow for the entire issue.

HOLT: Thanks for having me. It's been an incredible opportunity.

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*.