

Episode: *Author Interview: “Tonal Imprints From Procedure to Prognosis”*

Guest: Shahina Jaffer

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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 Shahina Jaffer, an alumna of London's St Martin's School of Art. She's here to discuss her paintings, *Holler, Wires and Whispers*, and *The First Tonal Imprint*, in the November 2024 issue of the Journal, [Peace in Health Care](#). Shahina, thank you so much for being on the podcast. [music fades]

SHAHINA JAFFER: Thank you, Tim.

[00:00:38] HOFF: So, what is the main ethics point of your work in the Journal this month?

JAFFER: So, my work was really largely based around a residency I did in Harley Street, and Harley Street, you may know, is quite a sort of a private medical area of London. And it really made me think about the intersection of art and medicine generally. And in this series, what I do is I look at the journey from both the medic's point of view and the patient's point of view. So I think there's a lot of overlay when it comes to ethics. So, for example, the patient's experience and the emotional impact a diagnosis may have on a person, it looks at things like highlighting how we might feel emotions like fear and hope, and touches upon resilience. So, each of the paintings really look at different aspects of the medical journey. It also brings in feelings of the medic, because here, our frontline workers are actually, you know, it's quite stressful. So but by combining the two, I think it looks at both the ethics from a patient's point of view, but also from a medic's point of view as well.

[00:02:07] HOFF: So, what would you hope that health professions students and trainees take from your pieces?

JAFFER: I'm hoping that it will resonate with people differently. So, that's quite the reason that I've used this form of art, that it's open to sort of personal interpretation.

[00:02:25] HOFF: And briefly, before we go on, can you explain for listeners who are not looking at these pieces right now what form of art you use?

JAFFER: Sure. So they're kind of expressionism with a sort of touch of abstract. So, the paintings work so that they could be read in any orientation, so they're largely abstract, I

would say. So, what I'm hoping people take away, and especially medics, is when you've got a prognosis, or you're actually given quite a lot of information to absorb as a patient and understanding that visuals within that whole process is something that is useful. So, I've looked at non-invasive surgery there and actually brought in elements of catheters and different equipment used within that arena, but also, as somebody that has been through the medical journey, I do feel that when a medic uses visuals, it does help with understanding. And I think at the center and the heart of it all is really the empathy, empathy on both sides. And I think that's quite close to ethics in itself. I think also, sometimes when we do a job like medics do, which is hugely important, once doing that for a very long time is still understanding that a body, to somebody, is their life.

[00:04:14] HOFF: Hmm. And if you could add something to these pieces or perhaps just draw out a certain point in the captions of these pieces, what would that be?

JAFFER: I think I would probably just talk a little bit more about how art is a tool for ethical reflection. And by that, I mean, although I allude to a lot of these things within these paintings that you see there, I don't know if there was something I could do a bit more to emphasize that point. Because I think one of the key things through a medical journey is impact, and the ethical points that I'm trying to make are slightly softer and probably not that easily noticeable. So, for example, the emotions. In one of the pieces I show the overlay of technology, so it's cool. You see the wires. And to somebody experiencing that for the very first time, it's probably quite daunting, but to somebody administrating that process, it's probably second nature. So, I think that's the area I would develop a little bit more. [theme music returns] And that's the, you know, art as a tool for ethical reflection.

[00:05:39] HOFF: Shahina, thank you so much for your time on the podcast today, and thank you for your contribution to the Journal this month.

JAFFER: Perfect. Thank you for having me.

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*.