

Episode: *Author Interview: “Government Obligations and the Negative Right to a Healthy Urban Environment”*

Guest: Sana Loue, JD, PhD, MPH, MSSA, MA, LISW-S

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 Sana Loue, professor in the Department of Bioethics at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine in Cleveland, Ohio, with secondary appointments in psychiatry, global health, population and quantitative health sciences, and social work. She’s here to discuss her article, coauthored with Jared Ontko and Timothy Nicholas, “*Government Obligations and the Negative Right to a Healthy Urban Environment*,” in the November 2024 issue of the Journal, [Peace in Health Care](#). Dr Loue, thank you so much for being here. [music fades]

DR SANA LOUE: Oh, thank you for having me. It’s great to be here. Thank you.

[00:00:54] HOFF: So, what is the main ethics point that you and your coauthors are making in your article?

LOUE: I think there are actually several, primarily, though, that governments have an ethical obligation in developing infrastructure to consider the potential adverse health consequences and to mitigate those consequences. I think that probably a secondary ethical issue that goes, really goes to since it is the AMA Journal, that goes to the obligation of physicians and other health care providers to consider the environmental context in which their patients live and the impact of government and climate change on their patients and their patients’ wellbeing.

[00:01:46] HOFF: And so, what do you see as the most important thing for health professions students and trainees at the beginnings of their career to take from this article?

LOUE: The literature reflects some controversy as to the extent to which medical education should be concerned with climate change, and the extent to which physicians and other health care providers should be engaged in advocacy. And I think the primary message to medical school students and to other health professionals is the need to recognize the government’s role in establishing, very often, inadvertently, but nevertheless establishing situations that essentially worsen potential patient outcomes and to engage in advocacy that will further their patients’ interests.

[00:02:52] 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?

LOUE: I would want to focus on strategies that health care professionals could use to better support everyone's negative right to a healthy urban environment and how we can effectuate that and maximize it in our current lives. I would love to see, for instance, health care providers become more involved in the politics of the situation. These are government entities that are, for instance, exercising eminent domain and supporting the development of infrastructures that, in the short run, may be economically beneficial to communities, but in the long run, really have the potential to worsen individuals' health. And I think it would be important for health care providers, including physicians, to understand better the ways in which government exercises its authority to do this and become really involved in educating legislators, administrative offices in government about the negative effects of moving forward in this way without considering ways to mitigate potential adverse health consequences as they strive to develop better infrastructure. [theme music returns]

[00:04:31] HOFF: Dr Loue, thank you for your time on the podcast today, and thanks to you and your coauthors for your contribution to the Journal this month.

LOUE: Thank you very much.

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*.