

Episode: *Author Interview: “How Should Clinicians Partner With Families to Promote Children’s Sleep Health?”*

Guest: Ariel A. Williamson, PhD, DBSM

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 Ariel Williamson, a clinical psychologist, diplomate in behavioral sleep medicine, and assistant professor in the Department of Psychology and the Ballmer Institute for Children’s Behavioral Health at the University of Oregon. She’s here to discuss her article, “*How Should Clinicians Partner With Families to Promote Children’s Sleep Health?*,” in the October 2024 issue of the Journal, [Sleep Stewardship](#). Dr Williamson, thank you so much for being on the podcast. [music fades]

DR ARIEL WILLIAMSON: Thank you for having me.

[00:00:48] HOFF: So, what is the main ethics point of your article?

WILLIAMSON: Unlike other articles, I think, in this journal, this is a more subtle ethical issue. So it’s not super clear in some ways that this is a concern related to quality of care. But I think the point or the ethical issue at the heart of this paper is really, how can we partner with patients and families to ensure that—even for something that may seem simple and straightforward like promoting sleep health—how can we make sure that we take the time during a busy clinical session to really unpack that and to tailor those recommendations?

[00:01:32] HOFF: And so, what’s the most important thing for health professions students and trainees specifically to take from your article?

WILLIAMSON: I think the most important thing is to keep in mind that evidence-based recommendations and guidelines for things like recommended sleep duration are just not one-size-fits-all. And taking that into account is extremely important, especially when partnering with teens or other youth and their families, to be really responsive to that child and family’s situation, whether that is related to neurodevelopmental differences, for example, situational, or contextual factors. All these different individual, family, and sociocultural issues that can come up are really important to take into account when we’re thinking through how we can both help empower youth and families to be aware of guidelines about healthy sleep, but also tailor these to really avoid doing harm, avoid promoting youth and families feeling bad about not meeting specific recommendations,

and instead, really encourage changes that are feasible, and again, are tailored to that particular youth and family and the presenting sleep concern.

[00:02:48] 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?

WILLIAMSON: I would encourage trainees and practicing clinicians to really look more into the resources that are out there for helping with sleep. And so, some of those resources could be through the American Academy of Pediatrics. There's the Pediatric Sleep Council. There's Nemours KidsHealth. Even though we know that there's a shortage of specialty-trained behavioral sleep providers, there are things that can be done, especially when we take into account tailoring guidelines. Another great resource is the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. And so, I think really trying to incorporate some of those resources into clinical care.

And of course, I encourage any researchers or quality improvement folks that may be listening to also conduct studies on how we can better tailor these recommendations and guidelines in ways that are feasible and efficient and can really be integrated into pediatric care, I think, especially in the context of a very fast-paced and short well visit. [theme music returns] But don't underestimate sleep. It's a modifiable factor, and it really can contribute meaningfully to child outcomes.

[00:04:09] HOFF: Dr Williamson, thank you so much for your time on the podcast today and for your contribution to the Journal this month.

WILLIAMSON: Thank you so much 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*.