

Episode: *Author Interview: “Which Values Should Guide Evidence-Based Practice?”*

Guest: Amber R. Comer, PhD, JD

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 Amber Comer, the director of ethics policy and the secretary of the Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs at the American Medical Association in Chicago, Illinois. She’s also an associate professor of health sciences and medicine at Indiana University. Dr Comer is here to discuss her article, “*Which Values Should Guide Evidence-Based Practice?*,” in the January 2025 issue of the Journal, [Epidemiology and Clinical Practice](#). Dr Comer, thank you so much for being here. [music fades]

DR AMBER COMER: Hi. It’s great to be here. Thanks, Tim.

[00:00:51] HOFF: So, what is the main ethics point of this article?

COMER: Well, this article explores the ethical issues that clinicians face in clinical practice when they’re combining evidence-based medicine and the art of medicine during medical decision making. Some of the other important parts of the article touch on how to manage care of patients who ask for treatments or interventions that aren’t evidence-based, and alternatively, how to manage the care of patients who refuse evidence-based treatments or interventions, which are two really common ethical dilemmas that physicians face during clinical practice.

[00:01:29] HOFF: And so, what should health professions students and trainees specifically be taking from this article?

COMER: It’s really important that physicians incorporate their clinical expertise with science, because using only science to make medical decisions fails to take the patient’s preferences, values, and goals into consideration. And really, that’s the art of medicine. It’s referring to this patient-centered approach. And so, it’s important to use the science, it’s important to use the evidence, but it’s also important to look at that evidence through the lens of what’s important to the patient. And so, I think that’s one of the most important things about the article, is how to incorporate both the art and science of medicine.

[00:02:13] 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?

COMER: What I would add to the article is some context behind a quote from Sir William Osler, who was a Canadian physician who was legendary for his teaching and practice of medicine, where Doctor Osler says, "The good physician treats the disease. The great physician treats the patient with the disease." Although this quote was spoken a really long time ago, I think it's incredibly applicable in the era of expanded science and expanded evidence-based practice. And I think as we develop more medical interventions and the science of medicine and the evidence basis of medicine expands, it can sometimes expand at the expense of recognizing the patient's preferences and values at the expense of that art of medicine. [theme music returns]

[00:03:16] HOFF: Dr Comer, thank you so much for your time on the podcast today, and thanks for your contribution to the Journal this month.

COMER: Thank you so much, Tim. It was really nice talking with you.

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*.