

Episode: *Author Interview: “Teletherapy Ethics”*

Guest: Teddie Bernard

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 Teddie Bernard, a recent graduate from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago with a bachelor’s degree in fine arts and a former art of medicine intern with the Journal. They’re here to discuss their comic, “*Talking About Teletherapy*,” in the March 2025 issue of the Journal, [Regret in the Moral Psychology of Surgical Professionalism](#). Teddie, thanks for being back.

TEDDIE BERNARD: Hi, Tim. Thanks for having me. [music fades]

[00:00:44] HOFF: So, what is the main ethics point of this comic?

BERNARD: So this comic is kind of exploring teletherapy at large. As teletherapy becomes a more common way to receive mental health care, the change between in-person and virtual therapy practices can affect clients in different ways. So, I did interviews with three different individuals who’ve had different teletherapy experiences, and then I was using those interviews to highlight the different teletherapy benefits and drawbacks that each one of them had had, and how it’s not really a one-size-fits-all experience.

So, a few things that are also explored within those interviews is how certain issues and emotions are dealt with in a teletherapy setting, as compared to an in-person setting; in what ways does a computer or a phone change the way you interact with mental health care; and how can therapists, or how do therapists, create environments that feel safe for mental health care; and what ways have been effective for these different people; which ways are those similar or different? And it’s kind of really a piece that is just highlighting these three patient perspectives in a way to kind of, like, I think about how AMA has a lot of case studies. These feel like real-life case studies of three people. It’s not saying, oh, this is a definitive thing as much as it’s saying, these are three different ways that this can be experienced. Here’s some pros they all have, here’s some cons they all have, and all of those are different.

[00:02:25] HOFF: And so, what do you see as the most important thing for health professions students and trainees who are reading this comic to take from it?

BERNARD: I already kind of touched on this in my intro, but I think it’s that when we’re looking at and considering the differences between in-person care and telehealth care, there isn’t really a one size fits all, right? These interviews, I’m hoping that they highlight the ways in which these three different people who have had roughly similar experiences with having online

mental health care all have different takeaways about what was most helpful for them. So, kind of at large, right, if you're thinking, oh, is it going to be more effective to be offering this patient telehealth or in-person visits, that's not going to be something where it's going to be a black and white situation.

[00:03:16] HOFF: And finally, if you could add something to this comic that you didn't have the time or the space to fully explore, what would that be?

BERNARD: This is a pretty large piece, as it's three different people's interviews, but all of them had amazing answers. And if I could have included everything all of them said, it would be twice as long. So, certainly I could have expanded on that, but I think the thing that I really would have liked if I was going to do a second follow-up or a larger comic, is there's two things. One would be to interview a larger demographic of people, I think specifically in age range, because most of the people I interviewed were between the ages of like, 21 to 25. And that gives you a very good sample size of that age range, but it would be interesting to hear the thoughts of someone who is maybe in their middle age who's in teletherapy. Maybe they've had different experience with therapy growing up. Maybe someone younger, someone who's still in their teens. But those were just things that I was not able to pursue because of time. [theme music returns] And also, once you're interviewing three people, that's a lot of people for graphic journalism.

[00:04:27] HOFF: [chuckles] Teddie, thank you for your time on the podcast today, and thanks, as always, for your contributions to the Journal.

BERNARD: Yeah, thank you so much, Tim.

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*.