

Episode: *Author Interview: “How Should Intensity and Duration of Pain Inform Standard of Care for Pain Management in Non-Labor and Delivery OB/GYN Procedures?”*

Guest: Evelyn Ainsley McWilliams, MD

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 Evelyn Ainsley McWilliams, a resident in obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Cincinnati Medical Center in Ohio. She's here to discuss her article, coauthored with Dr Lisa Bayer, “How Should Intensity and Duration of Pain Inform Standard of Care for Pain Management in Non-Labor and Delivery OB/GYN Procedures?,” in the February 2025 issue of the Journal, [Pain Management in Non-Labor and Delivery OBGYN Procedures](#). Dr McWilliams, thank you so much for being on the podcast.

DR EVELYN AINSLEY MCWILLIAMS: Thank you so much for having me. I'm excited to talk about our article.

[00:00:53] HOFF: So, what is the main ethics point that you and Dr Bayer are making in your article?

MCWILLIAMS: So, overall, a lot of our article is really looking forward, and what we're basing all of our thoughts on is the idea of informed consent, which, as listeners may be aware, informed consent being based on the idea of patient autonomy. So our article overall is really focusing on that idea that pain and pain management in these outpatient procedures, are we giving our patients the full informed consent? Are we minimizing? Are we telling them it will be just a little pinch and just a few moments? Or are we really giving them the opportunity to make a full decision about how they want to approach and how they feel most comfortable approaching these procedures?

When patients compare their experiences of pain with these procedures and they discuss with friends or loved ones, their experience is not going to be like that of another individual. So, being able to give them the full spectrum of experiences and the full spectrum of pain management available so we're able to tailor that and allow our patients to feel like they are having an informed decision about where they want to go and what they feel is most appropriate for them in that moment.

[00:02:25] HOFF: And so, what do you see as the most important thing for health professions students and trainees to be taking from your article?

MCWILLIAMS: The most important thing to remember is there's not a one-size-fits-all approach to managing pain in gynecological exams or procedures. Just because we tend to describe these procedures as short duration or just a cramp and pinch, a short duration does not mean that it is not a lasting experience or a significant experience for these patients. We bring up in our article the idea of the peak-and-end rule. Just because something is brief in time does not mean it is insignificant as an experience because we tend to remember that most painful moment. So, we should use a patient-centered approach and not minimize pain just because it is brief in time, or just because it's a brief experience does not mean that it is less significant or less memorable for our patients.

[00:03:32] HOFF: And finally, if you could add a point to your article that you didn't have the time or space to fully explore, what would that be?

MCWILLIAMS: I think we would've loved to spend a lot more time talking about empowering our patients. That's what we were really trying to get across, that we want to listen to our patients. We shouldn't minimize their concerns, even if their concerns are coming from something we might not take as seriously. Whether it's something that they saw on TikTok or heard from a friend of a friend, we should be asking them more questions and addressing those concerns, rather than being dismissive, and really find what's the root of that concern? And are we adequately addressing and reassuring our patients? [theme music returns]

[00:04:15] HOFF: Dr McWilliams, thank you so much for your time on the podcast, and thanks to you and your coauthor for your contribution to the Journal this month.

MCWILLIAMS: Thank you so much. It's been great.

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*.