

Episode: *Author Interview: “Lessons in Embodiment From the World of Physical Theatre”*

Guest: Zoe Rose Kriegler-Wenk, MFA

Host: Tim Hoff

Transcript: Cheryl Green

[Access the podcast.](#)

[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 Zoe Kriegler-Wenk, a writer, editor, and an interdisciplinary theatre-maker, and the editorial assistant for the *AMA Journal of Ethics*. She's here to discuss her article, “*Lessons in Embodiment From the World of Physical Theatre*,” in the June 2025 issue of the Journal, [Embodiment in Art Practice](#). Zoe, thank you so much for being here. [music fades]

ZOE KREIGLER-WENK: Thank you for having me.

[00:00:42] HOFF: So, what is the main ethics point of your article?

KREIGLER-WENK: So, as we know, health care's focused on healing the body, but rarely do clinicians take the time to tune into their own embodied experience and notice how that physicality affects their patients. So very simple physical cues such as breath, posture, eye contact, etc., those help us build a foundation of kinesthetic empathy with others, which oftentimes feels more genuine than just a verbal recounting of information. So, the potential for embodied non-verbal communication is a main piece of many physical theatre pedagogies. So basically, the article draws on the discipline of physical theatre and makes an ethical argument for using physical attunement in clinical settings to foster trust between patients and clinicians.

[00:01:38] HOFF: And so, what should health professions students and trainees be taking from this?

KREIGLER-WENK: I would say the most important thing for students and trainees is that both clinicians and patients are more than just data points. They're fully embodied individuals whose comfort in an intimate situation is very dependent on physical sensation. So, communicating information verbally is not the only approach a clinician can take to building this foundation of trust and positive communication. Clinicians seeking to build trust with patients should pay specific attention to their own embodied experience and what physical cues they're expressing to their patients in order to set the foundation for a safe and trusting relationship.

[00:02:24] 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?

KREIGLER-WENK: I would just add that a lot of physical theatre training is focused on this question of how do we build an ensemble that is physically attuned to the point of genuine flow and presence on stage? And this is a goal that aligns with the foundations of embodiment ethics, which acknowledge a reliance on others to care for the body. So, what we find when working with an ensemble is that this level of connectivity and trust cannot be fostered just by thinking and talking alone. So, this is why valuing approaches to kinesthetic empathy, movement synchrony, and physical attunement are very central in any type of caretaking relationship, including that of a patient and clinician. [theme music returns]

[00:03:14] HOFF: Zoe, thank you so much for your time on the podcast. It was great to have you on, and thanks for your contribution to the Journal this month.

KREIGLER-WENK: Thank you, 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*.