

Episode: *Author Interview: “Why and How Should Physicians Mitigate Threats of Nuclear War?”*

Guest: Ghee Rye Lee, MMSc, MM

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 Ghee Rye Lee, a medical student at the Ohio State University College of Medicine in Columbus with master’s degrees in immunology from Harvard Medical School and music from the Boston Conservatory at Berklee. She’s here to discuss her article, coauthored with Devin M. Kellis, Arthur E. Hale, and Dr Joseph G. Hodgkin, “*Why and How Should Physicians Mitigate Threats of Nuclear War?*,” in the August 2025 issue of the Journal, [Existential Health Care Ethics](#). Ghee, thank you so much for being here.

GHEE RYE LEE: Thank you so much for having me. [music fades]

[00:00:54] HOFF: So, what’s the main ethics point of your article?

LEE: Yeah. So, the key ethics point about our article is that physicians have a moral obligation to address the threats of nuclear war as a public health concern. In our article, we argue that this is at least for two reasons. First, a nuclear war would lead to catastrophic health and humanitarian consequences like blunt and penetrating trauma, radiation exposure, cancer, and global famine. That’s been estimated to potentially affect billions of people. Second, there is a long history of effective activism by physicians on nuclear weapons that we can draw on. This moral obligation also stems from the basic principles of medical ethics.

[00:01:48] HOFF: And so, what should your fellow health professions students and trainees be taking from this article?

LEE: I think the most important takeaway for students and trainees is that they can play a crucial role in addressing the nuclear threats. In our article, we highlight the importance of recognizing nuclear war as a public health concern. We have also listed some tangible action items that they can take to mitigate this threat. For example, they can reach out to their congressional representatives to support bills that can reduce nuclear risk and spending on nuclear weapons. They can also join established social movement groups like International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, known as IPPNW, Physicians for Social Responsibility, known as PSR—there are many chapters throughout the country—and also, a grassroots movement called Back From

the Brink. And they can join and use their resources and communities to amplify their voices and contribute to a safer world.

[00:03:05] 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?

LEE: I think it's easy to feel overwhelmed and even helpless by this, by the magnitude of this nuclear threat, but we have to remember that physicians have a proven track record of making positive changes. For example, the PSR, or the Physicians for Social Responsibility group, and the Saint Louis Baby Tooth Survey back in the '60s played a significant role in pushing President Kennedy to sign the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in 1963, which ended aboveground nuclear testing. And this is just one example of positive changes that physicians have made. And we can draw, we can look back to this history and stay optimistic, motivated, and take action because we can help shape the course of history and make our communities safer and free from nuclear threats.
[theme music returns]

[00:04:20] HOFF: Ghee, thank you so much for your time on the podcast today, and thanks to you and your co-authors for your contribution to the Journal this month.

LEE: Thank you for inviting us. Thank 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*.