

Episode: *Author Interview: “A Comic of RBCs and Other EHR TMI”*

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 graduate from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago with a bachelor's degree in fine arts. They're here to discuss their comic, *Raw Data*, in the November 2025 issue of the Journal, [Electronic Health Record Evolution](#). Teddie, thank you so much for being here.

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

[00:00:39] HOFF: Could you start by describing your piece to listeners and outlining the main ethics point?

BERNARD: Yeah, so it's a two-panel comic in which two patients receive information about their bloodwork. The first panel is titled *Post-visit Phone Call*, and the clinician is calling the patient on the phone and says, "Your bloodwork came back normal besides some slightly low red blood cell count, or RBCs." And the patient asks, "I see. So what does that mean?" The clinician says, "Right now you're all right, but we'll keep an eye on it going forward." And then in the second panel, it's titled *Post-visit Online Results*. And so, the patient is accessing their bloodwork on their computer, and they say, "Wow, I can see the whole chart for my bloodwork, but I don't understand this. What are RBCs? Should I call my doctor?"

And so, the key ethics point of this comic was kind of to get the viewers to think about the benefits and drawbacks of both ways of receiving information. MyCharts and other online platforms to view your health results are more and more widespread, and so there are many, many benefits to them, right? It's empowering to have access to all of your information and data. And also, sometimes that extra information can be overcomplicating something for patients and maybe making them more nervous about results that are just like slightly on the keep-an-eye-on-it side of the bell curve rather than like actual serious, this needs immediate follow-up sort of thing.

[00:02:13] HOFF: And so, what should health professions students and trainees who are looking at this comic take from it?

BERNARD: I was thinking about this, and I think in the age of information abundance we find ourselves in, interpretation of data continues to be important. Laypeople might not really be able to understand their chart, and nor do I think they should necessarily

be expected to. In my personal experience, I've seen friends and family and myself get chart results, and between them and a Google search, get themselves all riled up over something that, when they actually are able to speak to a doctor, isn't actually something that serious, right? [repeated ticking sounds throughout] So, I'd hope that health professionals and students would consider that when there's information to share with the patient, how to best approach it, right? Is there communication before tests are even done about what's going to happen afterwards, how the results will be communicated? And for larger tests and operations, what responsibility is there with patient clarification and follow-ups, whether that be notes on an online chart or a phone call?

HOFF: For listeners who have noticed the sound, what you're hearing in the background is some rain that has started beating on Teddie's windows.

BERNARD: Yes. That's rain that just started here. Let me move into a different room.

HOFF: Great. Thank you. [ticking pauses]

[00:03:41] While you move, I'll ask if you could add something to this comic or perhaps just highlight something in particular, what would that be?

BERNARD: [ticking returns] Yeah. So, like everything, this exists on a spectrum. And so, I think that if there was room for more in this two-panel comic or maybe something to consider would be, what are those in-between points? I wanted to bring up an example from my own life, which is as someone who is currently getting bloodwork done every few months, I have a doctor who's communicated to me, "Hey, unless I reach out to you, you don't need to worry about your chart. You can look at it. It's going to be uploaded online, but I'll let you know if there's anything concerning that you and I need to touch base on." And that sort of communication before is really helpful for me as a patient, [theme music returns] and I think kind of speaks to what those in-between solutions are between these two points.

[00:04:38] HOFF: Teddie, thank you so much for your time on the podcast today, and thanks for your contribution to the Journal this month.

BERNARD: Yes, of course. Thanks for having me, 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*.