

Episode: *Author Interview: “How to Teach Good EHR Documentation and Deflate Bloated Chart Notes”*

Guest: Neda Frayha, 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 Neda Frayha, a primary care internist who serves as the audio editor-in-chief and senior director of education at Hippo Education, where she's also editor and host of the podcast *Primary Care Reviews and Perspectives*. She's here to discuss her article, “*How to Teach Good EHR Documentation and Deflate Bloated Chart Notes*,” in the November 2025 issue of the Journal, [Electronic Health Record Evolution](#). Dr Frayha, thank you so much for being here.

DR NEDA FRAYHA: Thank you so much for having me. [music fades]

[00:00:51] HOFF: So, what is the main ethics point that you're making in this article?

FRAYHA: Well, if we think about two of the core principles of ethics being beneficence, or trying to do good, and non-maleficence, or trying to do no harm, I think it's really helpful to think about what have our medical documentation notes become? They have become so bloated and just chunky, and there is so much imported text and data. They're pages and pages long. And I wanted to ask, what good is that doing? And actually, could it even be doing harm if nobody who reads the note can understand the most important points within a few seconds of taking a look at it? I also wanted to explore, what does this process of just more is more and putting more and more bloat into these notes, what does that process do for our medical thinking, for our thought processes, for how we approach our diagnoses, our assessments, our plans when it's just a ton of imported numbers and letters? Rather than a more concise, thoughtful, strategic short note that really shares what the practitioner is actually thinking and worried about.

[00:02:16] HOFF: And what should health professions students and trainees in particular be taking from this piece?

FRAYHA: That more is not more. So, there are times in any given documentation of a conversation, an exam with a patient, there are times to go deep. There are times to really tease out parts of the history. There are times to really say what you're thinking of in the assessment or what you want to do in the plan. But you do not need to put in

every single item in a lengthy, lengthy, lengthy problem list that has become 50 problems deep because nobody ever prunes it or shortens it along the way or removes irrelevant data. I would say one of the most important teaching points is to wonder and reflect: What are the most important points that another clinician reading this note should walk away with after taking a look at this? Or the patient themselves, what do they need to know, and how do I communicate that?

[00:03:19] 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?

FRAYHA: Since I wrote the article, I have talked to more and more friends and colleagues who are using AI scribes in their practices and who talk about the life-changing benefits of that—of finishing their notes on time, of enjoying patient encounters in a whole new way—because they can be focused on the patient in front of them, they can maintain eye contact. They're not absorbed in the computer during the entire patient visit. I think an additional element to this article would be that is fantastic, and we can still use that wonderful technology, at times, to our advantage. But it doesn't change the core concept that a patient note should still be a helpful document. Just because it might be easier to compile, it doesn't change our approach to what should we really be including? What is most valuable and helpful? [theme music returns]

[00:04:27] HOFF: Dr Frayha, thank you so much for your time on the podcast today, and thanks for your contribution to the Journal this month.

FRAYHA: Tim, thank you so much for having me. It's been a pleasure.

HOFF: To read the full article and 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*.