

Episode: *Author Interview: “How Should We Think About Ambient Listening and Transcription Technologies’ Influences on EHR Documentation and Patient-Clinician Conversations?”*

Guest: Sara Gerke, Dipl-Jur Univ, MA

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 Sara Gerke, an associate professor of law and the Richard W. & Marie L. Corman Scholar at the College of Law, as well as an associate professor at the European Union Center at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. She’s here to discuss her article, coauthored with Dr David Simon, “*How Should We Think About Ambient Listening and Transcription Technologies’ Influences on EHR Documentation and Patient-Clinician Conversations?*,” in the November 2025 issue of the Journal, [Electronic Health Record Evolution](#). Sara, thank you so much for being here.

SARA GERKE: Thank you so much, Tim, for having me. [music fades]

[00:01:00] HOFF: So, what is the main ethics point that you’re making in this article?

GERKE: In this article, which I wrote with my coauthor David Simon, we discuss the trend of hospitals incorporating AI scribes into their workflow and also, how such scribes might influence electronic health record documentation and the patient-clinician relationship. And just to give you a little bit of background here, so AI scribes, these are tools powered by artificial intelligence. And they typically record and transcribe the patient-clinician encounter, and then they generate a summary of the conversation in a clinical note, which is sent to the clinician for review. And these tools really promise a lot of good things like reducing documentation time, also clinician burnout. But then on the other hand, they also do raise ethical and legal issues ranging from privacy concerns to liability risks.

[00:01:52] HOFF: And what should health professions students and trainees in particular be taking from this piece?

GERKE: Yeah, I recommend that they really stay on top of the developments in health care AI. So as future health care professionals, it’s really going to be crucial to understand the benefits and also pitfalls of those tools, and education in this area is going to be critical. So, we humans, for example, tend to fall into this trap of automation bias. So once we realize that the AI does a pretty good job, we may rely on it a little bit

too much. And so, it's really going to be essential to prevent falling into this trap by, for example, in the case of AI scribes, always carefully reviewing the AI-generated note for any hallucinated, missing, or incorrect information before clicking the "okay" button. And I also encourage future health professionals to be really transparent with patients from the start. So I believe the best approach is always to embrace new technology and inform patients about how it's used—so including its benefits, also risks—rather than hiding it. And in the case of AI scribes, health care professionals really need to be particularly sensitive when seeking informed consent to ensure that patients who are uncomfortable with being recorded can easily opt out without damaging the trust in the patient-clinician relationship.

[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?

GERKE: Generally, I would say I believe AI is developing at such a rapid pace that it's really sometimes helpful to pause for a moment and also assess whether the tools deliver what they promise. So, in other words, I think health care providers such as hospitals and clinicians really always need to make sure to properly validate the tools before adopting them, including addressing the privacy and security concerns. And that's also really important for mitigating liability risks. So, for example, once a hospital decides using an AI scribe, it should really ensure that clinicians receive proper training on these tools and establish a meaningful informed consent process. Hospitals should also really continuously monitor the use of these tools to verify if they fulfill their promise to prevent burnout and also help clinicians reduce their documentation time. And then finally, they should investigate the long-term effects of these tools. So, for example, the trust relationship between clinicians and patients, the electronic health record documentation, and also what impact those tools could have on coding practices.
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[00:04:39] HOFF: Sara, thank you so much for your time on the podcast, and thanks for your and your coauthor's contribution to the Journal this month.

GERKE: Thank you so much.

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*.