

Episode: **Author Interview: “Whose Responsibility Is It to Address Bullying in Health Care?”**

Guest: Lindsey Carlasare, MBA

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Transcript by: Cheryl Green

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[bright theme music]

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 format for accessing the interesting and important work being done by Journal contributors each month. Joining me on this episode is my colleague Lindsey Carlasare, a Research Manager at the American Medical Association in the Professional Satisfaction and Practice Sustainability Business Unit in Chicago, Illinois. She's here to discuss her article coauthored with Dr Gerald Hickson, [Whose Responsibility Is It to Address Bullying in Health Care?](#), in the December 2021 issue of the Journal, *Health Justice and Diversity in Medical School Admissions*. Lindsey, thank you so much for being on the show today.  
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LINDSEY CARLASARE: Thank you for having me, Tim. I really appreciate the opportunity to share my insights on this topic.

HOFF: So, to begin with, what is the main ethics point of your article?

CARLASARE: Really, what this issue comes down to from an ethics point of view is patient safety. A culture of safety can't thrive in an environment in which bullying and disrespectful behavior are tolerated. It's also about the commitment that health care workers make to creating that culture of safety. Part of this is a commitment to provide patient care with compassion and respect for human dignity and rights.

Physicians also commit to upholding the standards of professionalism and respect the rights of their patients and colleagues. And these are core elements of the Code of Medical Ethics, which we all know defines ethical and moral behavior for physicians. The bottom line is really, disrespectful behavior and bullying are antithetical to these important commitments, and they really are counterproductive to patient safety and high quality, patient-centered care.

HOFF: Great. Thank you. And what do you see as the most important thing for health professions students and trainees who are just beginning their careers to take from your article?

CARLASARE: I would say the most important thing to take away from it is the idea that everyone is accountable. Professionalism is not just a physician thing. It's not just a leader thing. It's something that everyone in the health care organization should commit to and exemplify. And when someone sees or experiences unprofessional behavior, they are responsible for reporting it. I would say to students and trainees, if you see or experience bullying, address it and don't ignore it. If you see or experience other kinds of disrespectful behavior, particularly directed at your fellow students and trainees, address it and don't

ignore it. Ignoring bullying allows patterns of behavior to develop and continue and can have devastating consequences.

And I know it can be intimidating, and some of you might be concerned about how intervening will affect your reputation or relationships. But I think it's most important in that instance to remember that your commitment is making sure your patients are getting the best care possible. And if the care team is distracted by threatening or disrespectful colleagues, those patients aren't getting the kind of attention and care they really deserve.

HOFF: Mm. And finally, if you could add a point to your article that you don't feel like you got to fully explore, what would that be?

CARLASARE: You know, it's the unfortunate case that bullying and disrespectful behavior are often directed at medical students and residents. It's especially disheartening considering they are the ones most vulnerable and most in need of good examples from their leaders and teachers. Breaking the cycle really needs to start here, and that's something that I would've wanted to emphasize in our article, had we had some more room. When learners are being shaped into medical professionals, they will carry forward what they learn throughout their careers. Being part of someone's medical education is an enormous responsibility, and it's a privilege. It's the perfect opportunity, in my view, to demonstrate and exemplify professionalism for the future generation of physicians and to stop the cycle of bullying, this bullying that contributes to an unhealthy culture in medicine. [theme music returns]

HOFF: Lindsey, thank you so much for joining me on the podcast for this episode.

CARLASARE: Thank you, Tim. I really appreciate it. It was good talking with you.

HOFF: To read the [full article](#) and the rest of the December 2021 issue for free, visit our site, [JournalofEthics.org](http://JournalofEthics.org). We'll be back soon with more *Ethics Talk* from the *American Medical Association Journal of Ethics*.