

Episode: **Author Interview: “Why Care-Based, Not Carceral, Approaches to Suspects With Mental Illness Is Key to Whether We Trust Professional or State Authority Ever Again”**

Guest: Frederic G. Reamer, PhD

Host: Tim Hoff

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 Dr Frederic Reamer, a Professor in the School of Social Work at Rhode Island College in Providence, and also an Instructor at the Providence, Rhode Island Police Department Training Academy, where for many years he has taught the police ethics content in the curriculum. He's here to discuss his article, [Why Care-Based, Not Carceral, Approaches to Suspects With Mental Illness Is Key to Whether We Trust Professional or State Authority Ever Again](#), in the February 2022 issue of *The Journal, Tactical Health and Law Enforcement*. Dr Reamer, thank you so much for being on the podcast today. [theme music fades out]

DR FREDERIC REAMER: My pleasure. Thanks for having me.

HOFF: To begin with, what's the main ethics point that you're making in your article?

REAMER: I think both law enforcement officials, criminal justice professionals need to have an increased awareness of behavioral health challenges that the folks they encounter experience and to respond accordingly. In addition, I think that health care professionals, professionals who work in emergency departments, health care professionals who work in correctional facilities, health care professionals who are consultants to courts around the country need to have enhanced awareness of the behavioral health challenges and the ethical dimensions of those challenges.

HOFF: Mmhmm. And for the health professions students and trainees who will go on to become some of those professionals who you're talking about, what do you think is the most important thing for them to take away from your article?

REAMER: I would say there are two key points. One is a keen understanding of the behavioral health challenges experienced by people who come into contact with police, criminal courts, corrections officials, and also a keen awareness of their ethical obligations to address those behavioral health issues consistent with core values in the health and behavioral health professions.

HOFF: And finally, if you could add a point to your article that you didn't have the time or space to make, what would that be?

REAMER: In a perfect world, health and behavioral health professionals who encounter patients and clients who intersect with the criminal justice system would have access to sophisticated, thoughtful ethics consultation when they encounter challenges related to the

use of invasive methods, coercion, when there are ethics questions about privacy rights and informed consent. I think it's so important for health and behavioral health professionals to have ethics radar, if you will, that leads them to consult with colleagues who have a keen understanding of ethical issues, who are trained to think through how to manage complex ethical dilemmas that often arise when health and behavioral health professionals encounter individuals with behavioral health challenges. In addition, ideally, I think curricula in medical schools ought to highlight ethical issues that can arise when physicians and other health care professionals encounter individuals with behavioral health challenges. And I think also, this ought to be part of the continuing medical education agenda. [theme music returns]

HOFF: Dr Reamer, thank you so much for your contribution to *The Journal* and for being on the podcast today.

REAMER: My pleasure.

HOFF: To read the full article, as well as the rest of the February 2022 issue for free, visit our site, [JournalofEthics.org](https://www.journalofethics.org). We'll be back soon with more *Ethics Talk* from the *American Medical Association Journal of Ethics*.