

Episode: *Author Interview: "How Should Responsibility for Proper Medication Disposal Be Shared?"*

Guest: Ladan Karim-Nejad

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 Ladan Karim-Nejad, a fourth-year pharmacy student at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond and co-founder of the Sustainable Pharmacy Project. She's here to discuss her article, coauthored with Kayla Pangilinan, *How Should Responsibility for Proper Medication Disposal Be Shared?* in the October 2022 issue of the Journal, [Health Care Waste](#). Ladan, thank you so much for being here. [music fades]

LADAN KARIM-NEJAD: Thank you for having me. I'm excited to talk about this.

HOFF: So, to begin with, what's the main ethics point that you and Kayla are making in this article?

KARIM-NEJAD: So, I think ethically, as living things on this planet, we should be thinking about ways to minimize our environmentally damaging practices to make sure we protect not only our well-being, but also the ecological health of other living communities that have to share the space with us. And so, thinking of waste as an afterthought is unethical, and we're seeing the impact of that now, even in medical waste. And so, it's really ethically responsible to continuously be thinking about our behavior that might contribute to environmental impact of pharmaceuticals as a clinician or a policymaker or an industry leader or even a health care user.

HOFF: And so, what do you think is the most important thing for health professions students and trainees to take from this article?

KARIM-NEJAD: I really want people to take away thinking deeply and holistically about what happens after dispensing, prescribing, administering, manufacturing, or even taking medicine. And so, to ask, "Does this condition truly require drug therapy at this time? Does this person even want to take or show willingness to take a pill or an injection or a liquid drug?" And even as a health care user to think about, "Do I have this medicine already at home unexpired, so I don't get a new prescription sitting at home?" And even a non-clinical setting, so think about, "How could I make better drugs that don't contaminate the environment after it leaves the human body?" And so, as a student or a newly graduated practitioner, it's so important to start talking and thinking this way, to create long-lasting changes in medical practice, and even to explore these conversations with mentors, professors, and attendees so that we can create groups of like-minded individuals to start advocating and empowering more people to think this way.

HOFF: And finally, if you could add a point to your article, what would that be?

KARIM-NEJAD: I would definitely add the importance of curriculum development in pharmacy schools. As medication experts, which pharmacists are so often thought of, it's so natural to think about pharmaceuticals from their first manufacture to ultimately what happens after they leave the pharmacy. Or what is the current best method of disposal when somebody asks us about that? And so, also, even thinking about how a patient environment can impact pharmaceutical patterns so that we can potentially address those issues instead of creating this drug cascade of keep adding drugs to symptoms and side effects instead of actually treating the patient. And so, pharmacists should really be thinking about that, and I think the best way to do that is to start including that into pharmacy school curriculum.

And I think student advocacy has a huge role to play in this era of health care that we're in right now. And most students show really, they're really excited to learn more about ways to protect the natural environment and things that could potentially harm wildlife and resources. And so, I would love to highlight those areas in the curriculum. As a current student and future soon-to-be pharmacist, I can definitely see room for environmental discourse that wouldn't take away from anything that's already included in the curriculum now. [theme music returns]

HOFF: Ladan, thank you so much for your time on the podcast today, and thanks to you and Kayla for your contribution to the Journal this month.

KARIM-NEJAD: Thank you so much.

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