

Episode: *Author Interview: “Strategies to Help Health Care Organizations Execute Their Food System Leadership Responsibilities”*

Guest: Susan Veldheer, DEd, RD

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 Susan Veldheer, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Family and Community Medicine and the Department of Public Health Sciences at the Penn State College of Medicine in Hershey, Pennsylvania. She’s here to discuss her article, coauthored with Dr Daniel George, *Strategies to Help Health Care Organizations Execute Their Food System Leadership Responsibilities*, in the October 2022 issue of the Journal, [Health Care Waste](#). Dr Veldheer, thank you so much for being on the podcast with me. [music fades]

DR SUSAN VELDHEER: Thanks for having me.

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

VELDHEER: Well, I think our main point is to try to focus people who work in health care organizations on their responsibility and strategies that they can use to make an impact in three different places—health, which is obvious because that’s their main focus—but also sustainability, and improving diet—and think about ways that those three things can intersect.

HOFF: And so, what do you see as the most important thing for health professions students and trainees at the beginnings of their career to take from this article?

VELDHEER: Well, we tried to outline two places where these three issues intersect, and we chose two specifically to highlight in this article. And that’s community health needs assessments and screening for social determinants of health. Both of these things are already happening in clinical settings, and so we offer a couple of ideas, several ideas, for how individual health care practitioners can actually execute this goal in those settings. So, we talk a little bit about how when screening for social determinants of health, where they might think about the impact of food on those social needs. So, perhaps food insecurity would be one place that gets triggered when screening for social needs. And health care organizations are trying to think about how to address food insecurity, but sustainability and diet quality can also be addressed at the same time, as long as there is a purposeful move towards trying to do that. So, thinking about purchasing fruits and vegetables locally, thinking about the impact of diet on sustainability, those are the kinds of issues that we bring up as they’re thinking about addressing social needs, for instance.

HOFF: And 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?

VELDHEER: Well, we brought up just two issues, social needs: social determinants of health screening and community health needs assessments. But a third one would definitely be talking to patients about plant-based diets and how plant-based diets impact environmental sustainability, which they do in a positive way. [theme music returns]

HOFF: Well, Dr Veldheer, thank you so much for your time on the podcast today and for your and Dr George's contribution to the Journal this month.

VELDHEER: Thank you for having me.

HOFF: To read the full article, as well as the rest of the October 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*.