

Episode: *Author Interview: “How Should Cost-Informed Goals of Care Decisions Be Facilitated at Life’s End?”*

Guest: Jing Li, PhD

Host: Tim Hoff

Transcript by: Cheryl Green

[Access the podcast.](#)

[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 Jing Li, an Assistant Professor in the Comparative Health Outcomes, Policy, and Economics Institute and in the Department of Pharmacy, in the School of Pharmacy at the University of Washington in Seattle. She’s here to discuss her article, coauthored with Dr Robert Tyler Braun, Sophia Kakarala, and Dr Holly G. Prigerson, *How Should Cost-Informed Goals of Care Decisions Be Facilitated at Life’s End?*, in the November 2022 issue of the Journal, [How Much Will It Cost?](#) Dr Li, thank you so much for being on the podcast with me. [music fades out]

DR JING LI: Thank you so much, Tim, and great to be here.

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

LI: Yeah. So, in summary, we think that medical decision making during a patient’s end of life should be a joint process where non-clinical factors such as cost are just as important as clinical factors and should be given sufficient attention and communicated clearly to patients. That is really the takeaway message or the key ethics point that we want to convey in our article.

HOFF: And so, what do you see as the most important thing that health professions students and trainees specifically should take from this article?

LI: Sure, yeah. So, we think that it’s really important to recognize that each patient is unique in terms of not only their medical condition, but also their preferences, family, and financial situations. So, all of these factors really affect patient and also their family’s understanding of key information and affect our decision making about care at really any stage, but particularly at the end of life where a lot of things have to be factored in. So, we think that it is very important for future health professionals to develop respect, empathy, and patience for their patients, and whenever possible, provide support in ways beyond clinical care. I realize that this is sometimes hard to do, but I think we all like to kind of achieve the perfect state. So, we think that this is what we want to really kind of tell health professions students and trainees.

HOFF: And finally, if you could add a point to this article that you didn’t have the time or space to fully explore, what would that be?

LI: Sure. So, obviously, facilitating cost-informed goals of care is a complex process that is influenced by many factors beyond just provider-patient communication. So, in this article,

we are focusing on how to better provider-patient communication involving cost discussions. But really, the current health care system has its own issues. It's highly fragmented with complex incentives that do not always facilitate this kind of patient-centered care and also cost-informed goals of decision. And the high administrative burden, frankly, also takes time away from providers to engage in effective patient communication. So, all of these are challenges and difficulties that we recognize.

So, ultimately, all of these issues need to be somehow resolved or at least mitigated to improve care decision in end of life. We're not suggesting that providers or provider-patient communication is the only thing that could be improved. There are a lot of those other factors involving sort of health care system and potentially decisions by health care policymakers that could also contribute to improving the process. [theme music returns]

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

LI: Thanks so much again and thanks for having me.

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