

Episode: *Author Interview: “Is There a Case for Palliative Care Addiction Psychiatry?”*

Guest: Cynthia Geppert, MD, PhD, DPS, MA, MPH, MSB, MSJ, HEC-C

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*. Joining me on this episode is Dr Cynthia Geppert, the lead health care ethicist, Western Region, and director of ethics education at the Veterans Affairs National Center for Ethics in Health Care and a professor of psychiatry and internal medicine and the director of ethics education at the University of New Mexico School of Medicine, as well as an adjunct professor of bioethics at the Alden March Bioethics Institute, Albany Medical College. She’s here to discuss her article, “*Is There a Case for Palliative Care Addiction Psychiatry?*,” in the September 2023 issue of the Journal, [Palliative Psychiatry](#). Dr Geppert, thank you so much for being on the podcast. [music fades]

DR CYNTHIA GEPPERT: Thank you, Mr. Hoff, for having me. I’m very glad to be here.

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

GEPPERT: So, the main ethics point—it’s a case study with commentary—is that persons with advanced substance use disorders such as in the case methamphetamine or stimulant use disorder, often don’t receive ethically appropriate palliative care. And the article talks about this is due to several barriers, including lack of knowledge and skill on the practitioner’s part, stigmatization, and fear of liability professionally. But with specialty expertise, with empathy and harm reduction orientation, these barriers really can be overcome, and that benefits patients and staff.

HOFF: And what do you see as the most important thing for health professions students and trainees to take from your article?

GEPPERT: So, I’m really glad that you asked this question because there is a real need for trainees, students, residents, and fellows to specialize in these areas. There are very few of us who have the expertise in both palliative and in addiction medicine, and so trainees that are interested in one or either or both, and especially the interface, should consider seeking additional education or specializing in this neglected area because it really requires both. And the patients very much, very much appreciate having the coordinated care.

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

GEPPERT: So, the reason I wanted to write the article about stimulant use disorder, specifically methamphetamine, is because we are just beginning to give attention to palliative care for patients with opiate use disorders. There’s a few articles and some early guidelines, but there’s been relatively no attention, or much less, toward other substance use disorders that we see very commonly across the country in all kinds of health care settings, stimulant use disorder and even alcohol, when they reach end stages and require palliative care. [theme music returns]

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

GEPPERT: Well, thank you for the privilege to speak on the podcast and also to have an article in *AMA Journal of Ethics*.

HOFF: To read the full article, as well as the rest of this month's issue for free, visit our site, journalofethics.org. We'll be back soon with more *Ethics Talk* from the *American Medical Association Journal of Ethics*.