

Episode: *Author Interview: "Rest Is the First Casualty of Constant Messaging"*

Guest: Kathleen Wong
Host: Tim Hoff
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[bright theme music]

[00:00:04] 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 way to access the interesting and important work being done by Journal contributors each month. Joining me on this episode is Kathleen Wong, a fourth-year medical student at the Arizona College of Osteopathic Medicine in Glendale. She's here to discuss her comic, "*Lit, Unread, Unrested*," in the November 2023 issue of the Journal, [Health and Loneliness](#). Kathleen, thank you so much for being on the podcast.
[music fades]

KATHLEEN WONG: Hi, everyone. Thank you so much for having me.

[00:00:41] HOFF: To begin with, what's the main ethics point of your comic?

WONG: So, my drawing explores how technology, for example, health care organizations' online messaging system, has increased access to physicians but can also have a negative impact on physicians' mental health. That was depicted here by the dark atmosphere and messy room.

[00:01:01] HOFF: And what's the most important thing for your fellow health professions students and trainees to take from this piece?

WONG: Yeah. So, the most important thing for my fellow health professions and students and trainees is to be aware of burnout. It can be subtle and accumulate from unexpected places, like doing something as seemingly harmless as answering unread messages. Especially because they say that many of us have Type A personalities where we want to get everything done, and it's always go, go, go, and answer all of our unread messages. But sometimes that's not practical. Administrative tasks are one of the least pleasant things of our occupation, so be aware of it, and make sure you check in on yourself from time to time.

[00:01:42] HOFF: And finally, if you could add a point to your comic that you didn't have the time or space to fully explore in the piece as is, what would that be?

WONG: Yeah. So, I would say that one more point to add is that while technology can help us be more connected, it could absolutely prevent rest. Similar to social media, it can pull us away from the present of being where you are. If you're with your family or friends, maybe think twice about answering one more unread work message if you can. That's, of course, more easily said than done, which does make this an ethical issue. But triage your messages like you triage your patients. It's important to set boundaries. To my fellow health care professionals, please don't forget to value yourself. [music returns] Adding a hobby or something you enjoy to your to-do list is just as important as answering those unread messages. And this is a tough occupation, so let's keep supporting each other.

[00:02:29] HOFF: Kathleen, thank you so much for your time on the podcast today and for your contribution to the Journal this month.

WONG: Thank you. I appreciate it. It was fun.

HOFF: To read the full comic as well as the rest of the November 2023 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*.