Episode: *Author Interview:* "*Do You Know How to Assess Risks Posed by Over-the-Counter Vitamin A Supplements?*"

Guest: Rajani Katta, MD
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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 Rajani Katta, Clinical Professor of Dermatology at the McGovern Medical School at The University of Texas, Houston, and Clinical Assistant Professor of Medicine at the Baylor College of Medicine. She's here to discuss her article coauthored with Dina Zamil, Emily Burns, and Dr Ariadna Perez Sanchez, *Do You Know How To Assess Risks Posed by Over-the-Counter Vitamin A Supplements?,* in the May 2022 issue of the Journal, *Underregulated Supplements*. Dr Katta, thank you so much for being on the podcast with me today. [music fades out]

DR RAJANI KATTA: Oh, thank you so much for having me. It's an honor.

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

KATTA: The main ethics point is that there are a number of dietary supplements that are advertised for use in acne, and one category is high-dose vitamin A supplements. And those have been linked to birth defects. And so, it's really important understanding that there's limited FDA oversight of dietary supplements, that your patients could be at risk, and that physicians and patients need to be aware of that risk and how to evaluate for that risk.

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

KATTA: Well, I think one of the things that students, trainees, and other health professionals would find surprising is that there is very limited regulation of dietary supplements, and specifically when it comes to teratogenicity. So, I think the most important thing to remember is that the FDA is not requiring pregnancy warning labels on known teratogenic dietary supplements. So, it's really up to, it really falls upon the clinician and the patient or, in this case, the consumer, to understand the risks from these supplements and specifically how to evaluate for those risks.

HOFF: And finally, 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?

KATTA: Well, I would add the point that it's really surprising to us how difficult it can be to evaluate risk from some of these dietary supplements. So, in the article, we really walked our readers through the process of if you see this on a label in terms of the amount of vitamin A, in terms of the form of vitamin A, in terms of the units of measurement, how do

you take that and then translate that into a risk assessment? So, I would add the point that you can start there, but then you really have to understand sort of how to do that in a real-life setting with a patient in front of you and then how to sort of extrapolate that to other potentially harmful ingredients in these supplements. [theme music returns]

HOFF: Dr Katta, thank you so much for being on the podcast and for you and your coauthors' work in the Journal this month.

KATTA: Oh, I appreciate the opportunity to speak about it. Thank you.

HOFF: To read the full article, as well as the rest of the May 2022 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.*