

Episode: *Author Interview: "Is a Video Worth a Thousand Words?"*

Guest: Laura Kolbe, MD, MPhil

Host: Tim Hoff

Transcript by: Cheryl Green

[Access the podcast here.](#)

[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 Laura Kolbe, an assistant professor of medicine and assistant clinical ethicist at the New York-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center in New York City. She's here to discuss her article, coauthored with Drs Ryan Nelson, Joelle Robertson-Preidler, Olivia Schuman, and Immaculada de Melo-Martin, *Is a Video Worth a Thousand Words?*, in the July 2022 issue of *The Journal, Arts-Based Research in Health Care*. Dr Kolbe, thank you so much for being on the podcast with me today. [music fades]

DR LAURA KOLBE: Thank you so much for having me.

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

KOLBE: Well, we think it's becoming more and more common in clinical practice for patients, families, and other surrogates to interface with the clinical team and with the patient over phone or video or some other kind of mediated technology. And this is partly because of ongoing situations like hospital visitor restrictions because of COVID, as well as just changes in our general comfort levels with interacting with the world on our phones and our computers. And when clinicians are the ones who are setting up these interactions, and specifically when they're arranging for surrogates to view the body of a loved one in order for the surrogates to come to a specific decision regarding goals of care or some other clinical fork in the road, those moments are not ethically neutral. So, we want to provide an ethical framework so that clinicians can avoid being unethically manipulative when they set up those technologically mediated encounters.

HOFF: So, what's the most important thing for health professions students and trainees to take from this article?

KOLBE: Clinicians and hospitals should make sure that they're not setting up a double standard around the use of video calls as compared to in-person visitation. It's all too easy for clinicians to use selective framing and to take advantage of the particular affective salience of seeing the body of a loved one in order to nudge the decisions that surrogates make. Clinicians should primarily be using the video calls to inform rather than influence a decision and focus on the process of informed decision making rather than trying to drive towards a specific outcome.

HOFF: Hmm. 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?

KOLBE: I think there's a lot left to say about the power wielded by clinicians when they choose a specific modality and framing to convey information to a patient or their surrogates. So, we focused, for example, on video technologies like FaceTime or Skype or Zoom or other common platforms that allow surrogates to see in real time how a loved one is doing in the hospital, because that's rapidly becoming such a common practice in the hospital. But we'd really like to think further about the ethical implications of other uses of the visual in clinical practice. So, for example, if I show you an informational video about CPR or about hospice care or about a specific surgery, there's good data to show that often it changes people's minds about whether that particular intervention is right for them or not. But there's less conceptual work done so far on the ethical implications of how people might be nudged, or even at the extremes, maybe unethically manipulated by the way that that visual information is presented. [theme music returns]

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

KOLBE: It's such an honor. Thank you for having me.

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