

Episode: *Editorial Fellow Interview: "Turfing, USA"*

Guest: Sophia Görgens, MD

Host: Tim Hoff

Transcript by: Cheryl Green

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[bright theme music]

[00:00:04] TIM HOFF: Welcome to another episode of the Editorial Fellow 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 Dr Sophia Görgens, an emergency medical services fellow at the New York City Fire Department and Northwell Health in New York City. She's here to discuss her role in curating the December 2023 issue of the Journal, [Belonging, Placement, and Turfing](#). Dr Görgens, thank you so much for being on the podcast. [music fades]

DR SOPHIA GÖRGENS: Thank you for having me. I'm excited to be here.

[00:00:40] HOFF: So, what is the main ethics point of this issue?

GÖRGENS: So, this issue is all about patient placement. And in the past, we've often used derogatory terms like "turfing" or "pawning" when talking about patient placement. And although I think that thankfully the culture has largely moved away from using terms like that, there's still often the practice of turfing, even if it goes by another name. So, the problem is that patients, whether they're in the outpatient setting or in the emergency department or even in the inpatient setting, will often have multiple doctors taking care of their various medical problems, and often, these doctors or other health care professionals will get into debates about where best to have the patients receive their care.

[00:01:28] HOFF: And so, what do you see as the most important thing for health professions students and trainees specifically to take from this issue?

GÖRGENS: I mean, I think there are a lot of important articles within this issue ranging from how Medicaid funding for our training affects who we take care of versus sub-specializations versus the pressure on time. But I think for me, as an emergency medicine doctor, I find it particularly interesting to talk about the issues of emergency department overcrowding and overuse, as well as emergency department hoarding after patients have been admitted. The emergency departments, unfortunately, have nationally become safety nets for all of our patients who sometimes don't know where they belong. They don't know if they should be seeking their primary care doctor or a specialist, or maybe are having difficulty making appointments either due to health care insurance problems or because they keep getting referred to different doctors, and the emergency department ends up where they come for this help because we see everyone, we evaluate everyone. But this does come with a burden on the health care system and the difficulties of navigating that in the emergency department.

[00:02:46] HOFF: And finally, if you could add or emphasize a point that deserved further development in this issue, what would that be?

GÖRGENS: I think the important thing to remember for patient placement is that in the end, it's an issue that involves everyone. It involves all health care professionals, and what we need to remember is to put the patient first and to do what's best for the patient. A lot of times our turfing arguments are arguments about placement and where the patient should go and who can best take care of them move away from actually centering on the patient, and the patient's best interests might get lost in the argument. And so, we need to remember that what's best for patient care is going to be not only best for them, but also best for our interprofessional relationships with each other and for the future of our health care system. [theme music returns]

[00:03:42] HOFF: Dr Görgens, thank you so much for your time on the podcast today and for all your work bringing together this important issue.

GÖRGENS: Thank you. It was a pleasure being here.

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*.