

Episode: *Author Interview: “Answers to Patient, Student, and Clinician Questions About How Animals Are Slaughtered and Used for Food”*

Guest: Temple Grandin, PhD

Host: Tim Hoff

Transcript by: Cheryl Green

[Access the podcast.](#)

[bright theme music]

TIM HOFF (HOST): 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 Dr Temple Grandin, a professor of animal science at Colorado State University in Fort Collins. She’s here to discuss her article, “*Answers to Patient, Student, and Clinician Questions About How Animals Are Slaughtered and Used for Food*,” in the April 2023 issue of the Journal, [Meat and Health](#). Dr Grandin, thank you so much for being on the podcast. [music fades]

DR TEMPLE GRANDIN: It’s great to be here.

HOFF: To begin with, what’s the main ethics point of your article?

GRANDIN: Well, the main point is that the animals we raise for food, we’ve got to prevent suffering, give them a life worth living, and then when they go to the slaughter plant, a painless death. Those are the things that you would want to do. Now, slaughterhouses are not perfect, but compared to 20 years ago, they are a whole lot better. One of the things that improved them was when major customers such as McDonald’s started inspecting them. And when you have a major company inspecting a supplier, that often greatly improves the standards.

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

GRANDIN: Well, there’s been a lot of concerns about use of animals for food and the environment. And I’ve done a lot of research into grazing, and there’s huge amounts of land in the US and in other countries where the only thing you can use that land for is grazing. It’s too arid for crops. There’s a 100-mile stretch in eastern Colorado of prairie where grazing’s the only thing you could do with it. And if you do grazing correctly, you can actually improve the land. In other words, grazing animals—bison, cattle, sheep, and goats—may be part of the solution to a problem. Also, you’ve got all these big fields of solar panels. They need to have sheep grazing under them. You need to be using that land under those solar panels.

HOFF: And 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?

GRANDIN: Well, there are still things where there needs to be improvement. So, there’s been some controversies about CO₂ stunning methods. I think they’re correctable. Sometimes you can get an issue where the industry doesn’t want to address a problem of stunning methods such as Captive Bolt. Electric stunning, when used correctly, will cause instantaneous unconsciousness. Also, you’ve got to handle animals quietly, and this is where a lot of plants

have really improved. And this is where inspections by customers have also brought about big improvements. In my article, I just wanted to explain in a very straightforward way how slaughterhouses work. I also want to emphasize they've got to be managed. It's not a matter of just buying equipment. You have to manage the equipment that you have and have managers who care about animal welfare. [theme music returns]

HOFF: Dr Grandin, thank you so much for your time on the podcast. It's been an honor to talk to you, and thank you for your contribution to the Journal this month.

GRANDIN: Well, it's really great to be here. Thank you so much.

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*.