

Episode: *Author Interview: "Ageism as a Source of Global Mental Health Inequity"*

Guest: Pamela B. Teaster, PhD, MA, MS

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 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 Pamela Teaster, a professor and the director of the Center for Gerontology at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia. She's here to discuss her article, coauthored with Dr Al Giwa, "Ageism as a Source of Global Mental Health Inequity," in the October 2023 issue of the Journal, [Geriatric Psychiatry](#). Dr Teaster, thank you so much for being on the podcast. [music fades]

DR PAMELA TEASTER: Oh, thank you very much. I'm glad to be here.

[00:00:44] HOFF: So, to begin with, what's the main ethics point that you and Dr Giwa are making in your article?

TEASTER: That ageism is affecting the mental health care of older adults, which is also affecting their physical health care.

HOFF: Great. I love a concise response.

TEASTER: That's the main point!

[00:01:00] HOFF: All right. Perfect. So, what's the most important thing for health professions students and trainees specifically to take from your article?

TEASTER: That is a wonderful question and another really important thing we try to stress. So, I suppose we all think that we are not ageist, right? But in fact, we are. And it's one of those overt and microaggression kind of things. What is important for health care professionals and students is to sort of confront that and realize how it's affecting treatment plans. Which is then, of course, affecting treatment outcomes and of quality of life, not only for just the older people, but the people who are their constellation: their family, their friends, and so forth.

[00:01:39] HOFF: And finally, if you could add a point to this article that you didn't have the time or the space to fully explore, what would that be?

TEASTER: I believe what really needs to happen is, one, we need to take ageism seriously instead of as an -ism that, "oh, yes, there's that one too;" see that it really does have deleterious effects; and then begin to launch some serious, and I think, campaigns in various health care settings that haven't really, that ageism has not been addressed in. I would say, first responders, I would say students who are studying the issue should understand what that is doing. [theme music returns] And I think that is an issue of focus and probably dollars and probably training.

[00:02:23] HOFF: Well, Dr Teaster, thank you so much for your time on the podcast today, and thanks to you and your coauthor for your contribution to the Journal this month.

TEASTER: Sure.

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*.