



Discourse analysis in the exploration of health communication

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The so-called ‘discursive turn’ (Antaki *et al.* 2003) in the humanities and social sciences, which recognizes the power of language in use for constructing meaning and performing social actions, has given rise to a proliferation of discourse-based studies in various healthcare settings (e.g., Silverman 1997; Sarangi 2010; Heritage and Robinson 2011; Wicke and Bolognesi 2020; Brooks and Hunt 2021). As an interdisciplinary field encompassing the analysis of offline/online spoken and written texts (Harvey and Koteyko 2013), health communication has been an important research domain in that a micro-analytic qualitative enquiry into the discourse transpiring in hospitals, therapeutic settings, online forum interactions, weblogs or health promotion campaigns yields fine-grained insights into the complexities of healthcare. It is capable of “exposing beliefs and practices that might be taken for granted or overlooked altogether” (Harvey and Koteyko 2013: 2). Research findings produced by discourse analysts thus have a potential to illuminate the patient’s perspective and resonate with a community of healthcare professionals (doctors, nurses, therapists or counsellors etc.) who, after all, extensively perform their professions in and through language (e.g., Sarangi 2002). In this way, the methods and insights of discourse analysis can address the dilemmas and concerns of all participants of communication.

The aim of this thematic session is to contribute to the mounting body of discourse analytic research in health communication, and to discuss its affordances and relevance to the work of healthcare professionals. We invite papers reporting on empirical research, theoretical submissions, research proposals and work-in-progress papers.

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