



Biomedical and Health Informatics Lecture Series

Tuesday, March 31, 2009

12:00 - 12:50 p.m., Room T-498

Kenton Unruh, PhD

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School of Medicine, University of Washington**

“Transforming Clinical Workspaces into Effective Information Workspaces for Patients”

Although clinical workspaces are a primary location for exchanging information with clinicians, patients experience these spaces as harsh environments to access, use, exchange, and manage information. In this talk, I will present results from an ethnographic-inspired study of breast cancer patients actively interacting with information in clinical workspaces. Through observations and interviews, we observed information management in awkward positions; inefficient use of existing clinical space; and lack of support for collaborative document viewing. These factors compromised patients' abilities to manage their information work when encountering bursts of information exchange, lack of advance information, and fragmented attention in clinic workspaces. To overcome these challenges, I discuss formative strategies to focus attention, encourage collaboration, and improve communication in clinical settings. These strategies require nimble technology solutions to support interactive spaces in fixed clinical environments.

Kent Unruh is a Senior Post-Doctoral Fellow in the Division of Biomedical and Health Informatics at the University of Washington. Kent's research interests include consumer health informatics, with particular focus in how systems can improve access and use of health information. His dissertation, entitled "Information and the Cancer Experience: Patient Work in Cancer Care" explored the invisible work patients do during treatment for breast cancer. Kent's current research focuses on transforming the patient experience of health-care through designs to enhance information management, social support, and collaboration with clinicians. Kent received his Ph.D. from the Information School at the University of Washington.