Andrew Hoffman: 'Planning and Personalizing: On the Mutual Shaping of Personalized Medicine and Evaluative Practices in American Cancer Clinical Research'

What does it mean to govern cancer clinical research in the age of personalized medicine? Today's presentation attempts to answer this question through the analysis of a forum, initiated in 2009, which has set out to change how medical knowledge is produced within American oncology sector. I begin first by examining how the advent of new genomic technologies has precipitated increasing levels of uncertainty in the medical research community—both about the technologies themselves as well as the evaluative practices used to gauge their utility—and then move on to a review of recent critiques of 'evidence-based medicine' in general and of the American cancer clinical trials enterprise in particular. Using empirical data culled from my ongoing fieldwork, I then explore one response to these issues, deploying Fujimura's (1987) notion of 'doability' to examine a convergence of socio-organizational processes—that is, stakeholder input from a number of constituencies including health technology assessors, public and private insurers, patient and consumer representatives, community practitioners, and others—and economic-technical devices—vis-à-vis the introduction of an esoteric hybrid decision-analytic/economic form of modeling called Value of Research analysis (VOR). In so doing, I consider the implications of this melding for prioritizing clinical studies of personalized medicine tools in cancer care, which in turn promises to impact the organization of cancer clinical research and the delivery of care well into the future.