



# Applying Linguistics in Illness and Healthcare Contexts

Edited by Zsófia Demjén

"A potent reminder of the practical applicability of linguistics to addressing real life problems in healthcare and health education. The volume is striking in the breadth of methods represented and in its international scope, reporting on work conducted in Europe, Asia, Africa, South America and the USA. Most impressive, however, is that it speaks directly to healthcare professionals and health educators in language that reaches across disciplinary boundaries. It truly demonstrates how the role of Applied Linguistics has developed and matured since the early studies of doctor-patient communication nearly four decades ago." *Rodney H. Jones, Professor of Sociolinguistics, University of Reading, United Kingdom*

"This collection will be of immense value to students and researchers interested in communication in healthcare, as well as to inter-professional researchers and practitioners. Co-authored by international leaders of the field, it is comprehensive, well-structured and systematic. We have all been waiting for a book like this." *Diana Slade, Professor and Director of the Institute for Communication in Health Care, Australian National University, Australia*

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All aspects of illness and healthcare are mediated by language: experiences of illness, death and healthcare provision are talked and written about (face-to-face or online), while medical consultations, research interviews, public health communications and even some diagnostic instruments are all inherently linguistic in nature. How we talk to, about and for each other in such a sensitive context has consequences for our relationships, our sense of self, how we understand and reason about our health, as well as for the quality care we receive. Yet, linguistic analysis has been conspicuously absent from the mainstream of medical education, health communication training and even the medical or health humanities.

The chapters in this volume bring together applied linguistic work using discourse analysis, corpus methods, conversation analysis, metaphor analysis, cognitive linguistics, multiculturalism research, interactional sociolinguistics, narrative analysis, and (im)politeness to make sense of a variety of international healthcare contexts and situations. These include:

- clinician-patient interactions
- receptionist-patient interactions
- online support forums
- online counselling
- public health communication
- media representations
- medical accounts
- diagnostic tools and definitions
- research interviews with doctors and patients

The volume demonstrates how linguistic analysis can not only improve understandings of the lived-experience of different illnesses, but also has implications for communications training, disease prevention, treatment and self-management, the effectiveness of public health messaging, access to appropriate care, professional mobility and professional terminology, among others.

**Zsófia Demjén** is Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics at the Centre for Applied Linguistics, University College London, UK.



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