

**C**omputation and **I**nformatics in **B**iology and **M**edicine  
Training Program

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***Public Health Communication and the  
Potential Power of Informatics Tools***

**Abstract:**

Public health practice and policy is shaped by information that spans from molecules to global processes. Accurate public understanding of this information is key for promoting effective decisions at policy and personal levels. Social science methods are applied to understand how people use, comprehend, and respond to information. I will share findings from my research that explored how information and personal experience influenced protective behavior and opinions about policy for the public health threat of arsenic-contaminated well water. Results suggest that concrete personalized information and an understanding of causal mechanisms were especially powerful in shaping beliefs and behavior. Informatics tools that concretely display personalized environmental health risks and causal mechanisms may be an optimal means for promoting accurate beliefs and effective responses.

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**Tuesday, February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2005  
4:00 p.m.**

Genetics/Biotechnology Center Auditorium  
425 Henry Mall