Practices, safety and resilience in anaesthesia: conducting research outside of the ‘systems’ framework.

This seminar presents what we learn about safety in the setting of anaesthesia by looking beyond the familiar concepts of systems, safety science, and human error. It examines what happens if we unsettle the often taken-for-granted difference between ‘safe’ and ‘unsafe’ to investigate how safety emerges in everyday practices, and what this tells us about resilience and how safe patient care is enacted in anaesthesia. The seminar outlines the methodology and findings of an ecological praxiography investigating practice from ‘outside’, ‘inside’ and as ‘social effect’. The dimensions of practice included in this research are bodies, space, time and affect – these dimensions uncover different aspects of working safely in anaesthesia. Vigilance was found to be the ordering schema for the safe practice of anaesthesia, combining two ‘logics’ or ‘patterns’ of everyday work enacted in anaesthesia: the logic of risk and the logic of care. How these logics are combined has performative effects on the emergence of safety and resilience in anaesthesia. The logic of care is elided by the systems approach to safety. Recognising how care constitutes safety carries important implications for both learning about safe, professional practice in healthcare, and the formation of safety policy.

Bio:

Dr Kerry Warner is currently working as an independent, qualitative researcher in healthcare. Kerry worked for many years as a specialist anaesthetist; she is a Scholar Role committee member for the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists, and also teaches professional skills in medicine for the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and The Pam McLean Centre, University of Sydney. She obtained her PhD in Science and Technology Studies at UNSW. Her research focused on the relations of safety in anaesthesia by examining the dynamics of everyday practices. In 2014, she was invited to develop and conduct a short course on her research methods, based on practice theory and sociomaterial thinking, at the Mayo Clinic, Rochester MN. Kerry has a particular interest in qualitative research and social theory.