



MARIE SKŁODOWSKA-CURIE POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS 2025
EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR HOSTING MARIE CURIE FELLOWS

HOST INSTITUTION

NOVA University Lisbon - School of Social Sciences and Humanities (NOVA FCSH), NOVA Institute of Philosophy

RESEARCH GROUP AND URL

Argumentation, Cognition and Language Lab (ArgLab), Philosophy and Argumentation in Society (PAIS), <https://ifilnova.pt/en/research-groups/philosophy-and-argumentation-in-society-pais/>

SUPERVISOR (NAME AND E-MAIL)

Maria Grazia Rossi, mgrazia.rossi@fcs.unl.pt

SHORT CV OF THE SUPERVISOR

Maria Grazia Rossi (PhD in Cognitive Science) is a specialist in medical argumentation and healthcare communication. She is an assistant research fellow at the Nova Institute of Philosophy and an adjunct professor of communication at the NOVA School of Social Sciences and Humanities in Portugal.

Her research explores the discursive and ethical complexity of healthcare communication, with a focus on identifying processes and strategies – such as the use of metaphors – that foster mutual understanding and promote patient and citizen participation in health-related decision-making. Maria Grazia is currently developing a community-centred approach to health, emphasizing the interplay between public health discourse and patient-provider interactions. Her work also investigates medical scepticism and strategies for managing doubt in healthcare controversies.

She has published on a range of topics and contexts, including the use of metaphors in diabetes care and assisted reproductive technologies, communicative misunderstandings and breakdowns, and expressions of doubt in controversies such as vaccine hesitancy.

Since 2019, Maria Grazia has represented the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities in the Nova Saúde Chronic Diseases and Infection inter-faculty group. She also served as a member of the Advisory Committee and Deputy National Representative for Portugal at the International Association for Communication in Healthcare (ICCH) from 2018 to 2021.

5 SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- Rossi, M. G. (2025). Understanding the impact of figurative language in medical discourse: Toward a Dialogic Approach in Healthcare Communication. *Patient Education and Counseling*, 108811. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pec.2025.108811>
- Mohammed, D., & Rossi, M. G. (2022). The Argumentative Potential of Doubt: From Legitimate Concerns to Conspiracy Theories About COVID-19 Vaccines - *The Pandemic of Argumentation*. In S. Oswald, M. Lewiński, S. Greco, & S. Villata (Eds.) (pp. 125–144). Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-91017-4_7
- Rossi, M. G., Macagno, F., & Bigi, S. (2022). Dialogical functions of metaphors in medical interactions. *Text and Talk*, 42(1), 77–103. <https://doi.org/10.1515/text-2019-0166>
- Rossi, M. G. (2021). Metaphors and persuasion in healthcare communication. *Langages*, 222(2), 59–76. <https://doi.org/10.3917/LANG.222.0059> Ervas, F., Rossi, M. G., Ojha, A., & Indurkha, B. (2021). The Double Framing Effect of Emotive Metaphors in Argumentation. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 628460. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.628460>

- Rossi, M. G., & Macagno, F. (2020). Coding Problematic Understanding in Patient–provider Interactions. *Health Communication*, 35(12), 1487–1496. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2019.1652384>

PROJECT TITLE AND SHORT DESCRIPTION

Managing medical scepticism in healthcare discourse

Medical scepticism is gaining importance and has been studied mainly concerning the increase of public distrust toward healthcare authorities. Broadly understood as “global doubts regarding the ability of conventional medical care to appreciably alter health status” (Fiscella, Franks, Clancy, Doescher, & Banthin, 1999, p. 410), sceptical doubts have been linked to various problematic attitudes and behaviors, such as vaccine hesitance. Scholars typically analyze medical scepticism in public controversies and narratives, relating it to various information disorders (misinformation, disinformation, and malformation; see Wardle, 2018) and showing how information disorders affect citizens’ well-being and the healthcare system’s sustainability (Claggett, Kitchens, Paino, & Beisecker Levin, 2022; Fiscella et al., 1999; LaCour & Davis, 2020). Some studies underlined that the spread of risky health behaviors based on misinformation and doubt can be indirectly and even directly considered as a cause of death (Callahan, Freburger, Mielenz, & Wiley-Exley, 2008; Ferrer-Urbina, Ramírez, Mena-Chamorro, Carmona-Halty, & Sepúlveda-Páez, 2024; Wang, McKee, Torbica, & Stuckler, 2019). Evidence also shows that providers are still considered the most trusted source of health information and decisions (Marks & Califf, 2024) and that hesitancy decreases when providers create a dialogical space to discuss patients’ concerns and doubts (Shah et al., 2021). On the contrary, some studies show that minimizing and discursively downplaying expressed concerns can reinforce patients’ doubts and potentially impact their treatment adherence (Rossi, Mohammed, & Bigi, 2024). It is, therefore, a paradox that, despite the dangers of medical scepticism, little work is done to study how scepticist positions occur in medical interactions (Palmer & Gallagher, 2023). The project addresses this gap by proposing a fresh perspective on medical scepticism and analyzing it through dialogical lenses. Rather than treating scepticism as merely a psychological trait or information deficit, the book explores how doubt is expressed, interpreted, and managed in patient-provider interactions and public health controversies. Bridging health communication, philosophy, and discourse studies, the project aims to provide crucial insights for clinicians, policymakers, and scholars committed to improving dialogue and trust in medical settings and authorities.

References

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- Claggett, J., Kitchens, B., Paino, M., & Beisecker Levin, K. (2022). The Effects of Website Traits and Medical Skepticism on Patients’ Willingness to Follow Web-Based Medical Advice: Web-Based Experiment. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 24(2), e29275. <https://doi.org/10.2196/29275>
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- Marks, P., & Califf, R. (2024). Is Vaccination Approaching a Dangerous Tipping Point? *Jama*, 331(4), 283–284. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2023.27685>
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SCIENTIFIC AREA WHERE THE PROJECT FITS BEST*

Social Sciences and Humanities (SOC)