

HeaLing 2026

The 1st Workshop on Linguistic Analysis for Health

Proceedings of the Workshop

March 28, 2026

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Scented AI? Integrating olfaction into Large Language Models (VR 2024-01506)



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Introduction

Welcome to the inaugural edition of **HeaLing: The 1st Workshop on Linguistic Analysis for Health!** We are thrilled to welcome you to Rabat, Morocco, for this first-of-its-kind gathering co-located with *EACL 2026*. This workshop was born from a simple but profound observation: language in medicine is never neutral. It shapes how we understand illness, how clinicians interact with patients, and how public health policy is forged. As we open this forum, we aim to bridge the gap between the rich traditions of the humanities and the powerful, rapidly evolving tools of computational linguistics.

The program for this first year reflects the incredible diversity and urgency of health-related discourse. In line with global shifts in the field, a significant portion of our contributions focuses on the **capabilities and vulnerabilities of Large Language Models (LLMs)** in clinical contexts. We have papers exploring the impact of mixed-vendor multi-agent systems on diagnostic accuracy, the risks of sycophancy in multi-turn medical conversations, and the effectiveness of prompt optimization for detecting errors in clinical notes. These works don't just apply AI; they critically evaluate whether these models can truly maintain the rigor and reliability required for patient care.

A central contribution of this year's workshop lies in the **computational exploration of stigma, metaphors, and illness narratives**. By leveraging NLP to analyze large-scale datasets, our authors examine how diagnostic categories emerge and how the "naming and framing" of conditions affects societal perception. Significant studies in this edition track the longitudinal trends of autism stigma in media, the evolution of medical metaphors across scientific and public domains, and the way patient narratives on TikTok reveal interconnected health discourses. These papers demonstrate that quantitative methods can rigorously capture the subtle linguistic shifts that contribute to stigmatization or, conversely, to more inclusive health communication.

We also see a strong focus on the **computational analysis of patient experience**. From investigating the linguistic roots of loneliness in caregivers via Reddit to analyzing Norwegian patient feedback through aspect-based sentiment analysis, these studies highlight how digital platforms serve as mirrors for the human side of medicine. This work is complemented by research into **clinical assessment and inclusivity**, including multimodal frameworks for aphasia and wh-question development in children with hearing loss. Furthermore, several contributions provide critical case studies on the accessibility of cancer-related materials and the gender representation in vaccination campaigns.

Finally, our program highlights the **technical frontiers of health NLP**, particularly in resource-constrained or multilingual settings. These include innovative data augmentation for the "One Health" context, cross-lingual evaluations of LLMs for Arabic medical tasks, and neural embedding frameworks for normalizing health concepts across diverse text sources.

By bringing together researchers from ACL with scholars from medicine, social sciences, and the humanities, we hope to foster a "careful alignment" between computational methods and human-centered hypotheses. Whether you are here to discuss the ethics of AI empathy in clinical voice assistants or the technicalities of biomedical named entity recognition, we are certain you will find inspiration in these pages.

For more information, please visit our website at healing-workshop.github.io.

Our deepest gratitude goes to the authors for their high-quality submissions and to our dedicated program committee for their rigorous and thoughtful reviews. We also thank the EACL 2026 organizers for their support and for providing a platform to launch this important conversation. We look forward to engaging discussions, new collaborations, and the continued growth of this vibrant community in the years to come.

Vera, Murathan, Ylva, Julia and Andrew

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Keynote Talk
**Narrative Medicine and Natural Language Processing: A
Critical Juncture for Humanistic Health AI**

Kirsten Ostherr
Rice University, USA



Saturday, March 28, 2026 – Time: 14:15–15:00 – Room: SALLE Les Oudayas

Abstract: Much health humanities work has focused on the ways that narratives and texts can illuminate silenced or marginalized aspects of health and illness experiences. Scholars have emphasized the importance of historicized, contextually-grounded details that can be understood through qualitative analysis to give meaning to quantitative health data. With the rapid adoption of large language models (LLMs), narratives have suddenly taken on an outsized role in data-driven healthcare, without critical frameworks to contextualize their meaning. This moment presents a new urgency and opportunity for research at the intersection of computational and humanities-based methods. NLP-based AI tool developers can learn from scholarship in the digital humanities that draws on the affordances of large-scale, distant data mining techniques, while also engaging practitioners of narrative medicine that utilize the analytic, interpretive, close and deep reading tools of the humanities. The challenges of bridging from the patient to the dataset - or from the large language model to the personal health narrative - require new interdisciplinary methods with substantive grounding in radically different epistemologies. This keynote will present a case for understanding digital health humanities as a timely and necessary response to the emergence of health AI.

Bio: *Kirsten Ostherr, PhD, MPH* is the Gladys Louise Fox Professor and Founding Director of the **Medical Humanities Research Institute** at Rice University in Houston, Texas. Kirsten is the author of *Medical Visions: Producing the Patient through Film, Television and Imaging Technologies* (2013), *Cinematic Prophylaxis: Globalization and Contagion in the Discourse of World Health* (2005), and editor of *Applied Media Studies* (Routledge, 2017). She is currently writing *Virtual Health* (under contract with MIT Press) and “The Visual History of Computational Health,” supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Her research on trust and privacy in digital health ecosystems has been featured in **Marketplace Tech**, **The Atlantic**, and **STAT**. Her work on humanistic AI and health equity includes, “**Artificial Intelligence and Medical Humanities**,” “**Patient Participation in AI for Health Curriculum**,” and “**Responsible AI for Health**” curriculum supported by the National Humanities Center. She is co-PI on the NEH-funded “Center for Humanities-based Health AI Innovation,” and her work has also been supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the National Institutes of Health. She received the Health Humanities Visionary Award in 2024 from the International Health Humanities Consortium.

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Program

Saturday, March 28, 2026

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- 14:15 - 15:00 *Keynote Talk*
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- 15:45 - 16:15 *Coffee Break & Poster Discussions*
- 16:15 - 17:15 *Oral Presentations*
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- 17:30 - 18:00 *Poster Discussions*