NYU Stern School of Business
Department of Information, Operations & Management Sciences
INFORMATION SYSTEMS RESEARCH SEMINAR

TOPIC: Physician Heal Thyself? Competency Traps, Expertise, and Changes in Decision Making After Information Shocks
SPEAKER: Ritu Agarwal (University of Maryland)
DATE: Tuesday, April 1st, 2014
TIME: 12:30PM-1:45PM *Lunch will be served at 12:15pm.
PLACE: KMC 4-60

ABSTRACT

Although rapid response to exogenous information shocks is critical in knowledge-intensive professional domains, it is often hampered by cognitive flaws in the form of competency traps. We shed light on the theoretical tensions related to trade-offs between agility and exploitation of accumulated knowledge, and rational versus boundedly rational use of new information. Further, we investigate the extent to which variation in types and level of expertise influences response to information shocks, within the empirical context of physician decision making after a new medical guideline release about the efficacy of stents in treating coronary heart disease. Results indicate that physicians do incorporate new information into decisions, and are able to discern between contexts that are appropriate for the applicability of the information. Disturbingly, we also find that the pace of adjustment is not swift, and the ability to discern is adversely affected by the heterogeneity in the physician's patient mix. Importantly, we find that various types of expertise, particularly when such expertise is indicative of mindful retraining, attenuate the strength of competency traps.

BIO

Ritu Agarwal is a Professor, and the Robert H. Smith Dean's Chair of Information Systems, at the Smith School. She also founded, and is the Director of the Center for Health Information and Decision Systems (CHIDS). CHIDS, established in 2005, was the first research center within a business school to study the use and application of information technology in healthcare. Agarwal's current research is focused on understanding how information technology can be used to alleviate cost and quality challenges in healthcare, and with identifying mechanisms through which IT can be successfully incorporated into healthcare routines. She also studies privacy issues and other impediments and vulnerabilities in a digital society. She is working on several funded research projects for major corporations, hospitals, and state and federal agencies. Her research is funded by the FDA, the District of Columbia Primary Care

Association, and NIH/AHRQ. Other current research projects include online social networks, Health 2.0, and online search. She continues her work on technological innovation, adoption, diffusion and use.