Metaphor and framing in discourse

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The idea that metaphors can 'frame' topics or experiences in particular ways provides a useful link between cognitively-oriented and discourse-oriented approaches to metaphor. This talk builds on extensive analyses of authentic metaphor use, primarily from health communication, in order to reflect on the 'framing' power of metaphor and how best to account for it. These analyses suggest that the notion of 'framing' needs to include agency, evaluations and emotional associations, and that expressions belonging to the same broad 'source domain' can provide quite different 'framings' for a particular experience. The more specific notion of 'scenario' is better suited to account for metaphor and framing, but consideration also needs to be given to the uses of individual linguistic expressions and to co-text and context. Overall, this raises issues for the generalizability of claims about metaphor in cognition and discourse. These are relevant not just for researchers, but also for practitioners, especially in areas where metaphor choice can be sensitive and controversial, such as healthcare.