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In memoriam: Dale E. Brashers, communication department head at Illinois

7/8/10 | Craig Chamberlain, Social Sciences Editor |

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[[Email](#) | [Share](#)] CHAMPAIGN, Ill. — Dale E. Brashers, the head of the department of [communication](#) at the University of Illinois, died July 5 in his campus office. He was 50 years old.



Dale E. Brashers |
University of Illinois
Photo

Brashers, whose research focused on how people manage and cope with illness, joined the U. of I. faculty in 1998. He served as the director of graduate studies in the department (then called speech communication) from 2002-2006, and then as associate head until January 2009, when he became head. Beginning in 2008, he also held a joint appointment as a professor of [medicine](#).

Brashers earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in 1987 and 1988, respectively, from the University of Arkansas, Little Rock, and earned his doctorate in 1994 from the University of Arizona. He began his academic career in 1993 at Ohio State University, moving to the U. of I. five years later.

Brashers' health communication research focused on the role of communication in the management of health and illness for persons living with HIV or AIDS. Among the goals in his research were giving patients the means for dealing with and managing uncertainty, and for developing self-advocacy skills.

Since 2008, Brashers held a named position as the David Swanson Professorial Scholar, an honor of which he was extraordinarily proud, according to David Tewksbury, associate head of communication, since it was named after his late friend and former department head David Swanson.

Brashers was honored in 2004 as a University Scholar, a three-year research-support award for outstanding research, teaching and service. Also in 2004, he was awarded the Distinguished Article Award for the most outstanding article in the previous five years by the Health Communication Divisions of both the National Communication Association and the International Communication Association. In 2001, he received the Young Scholar Award for Outstanding Early Career Research from the ICA.

In addition to his national reputation as a researcher, Brashers also was a highly accomplished and popular teacher of undergraduate and graduate students, Tewksbury said. He was listed more than a dozen times on the List of Teachers Rated as Excellent for the Urbana campus, and in 2008 he received the Campus Award for Excellence in Graduate and Professional Teaching.

Brashers is survived by his parents, James (Gene) and Lou Brashers; sister Brenda Brashers Robertson; and nieces Tasha and Marie Robertson. A memorial service is planned for September, and will take place on campus. Memorial contributions may be made to [Arkansas Children's Hospital](#), [Tupelo Children's Mansion](#) or the U. of I. department of communication.



Dale E. Brashers

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Professor and Department Head

Bio

Professor Brashers is investigating the role of communication in the management of health and illness for persons living with HIV or AIDS. One project funded by a grant from the National Institute of Nursing Research, (part of the National Institutes of Health) involves describing the nature of uncertainty and the mechanisms of uncertainty management for this population. This study will lead to the development and testing of an uncertainty management intervention in which individuals who are newly-diagnosed with HIV will learn communication skills (e.g., self-disclosure, physician-patient communication, information search) from a peer educator. A related research project focuses on the development of self-advocacy skills for HIV-infected individuals.

Curriculum Vitae

Experience

- Health communication; effects of HIV illness on communication; uncertainty management; argumentation; research methods.

Education

- Ph.D., University of Arizona

Selected Publications

Brashers, D. E. (2007). A theory of communication and uncertainty management. In B. Whaley & W. Samter (Ed.), *Explaining communication theory* (pp. 201-218). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Brashers, D. E., Hsieh, E., Neidig, J. L., & Reynolds, N. R. (2006). Managing uncertainty about illness: Health care providers as credible authorities. In R. M. Dailey & B. A. Le Poire (Eds.), *Applied interpersonal communication matters* (pp. 219-240). New York: Peter Lang.

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Brashers, D.E., Goldsmith, D.J., & Hsieh, E. (2002). Information seeking and avoiding in health contexts. *Human Communication Research, 28*, 258-271.

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Brashers, D.E., Neidig, J.L., Dobbs, L.K., Russell, J.A., Cardillo, L.W. & Haas, S.M. (2001). Transitions and challenges: Revival and uncertainty for persons living with HIV and AIDS. In S.G. Funk et al. (Eds.), *Key Aspects of Preventing and Managing Chronic Illness* (pp.141-160). New York: Springer.

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