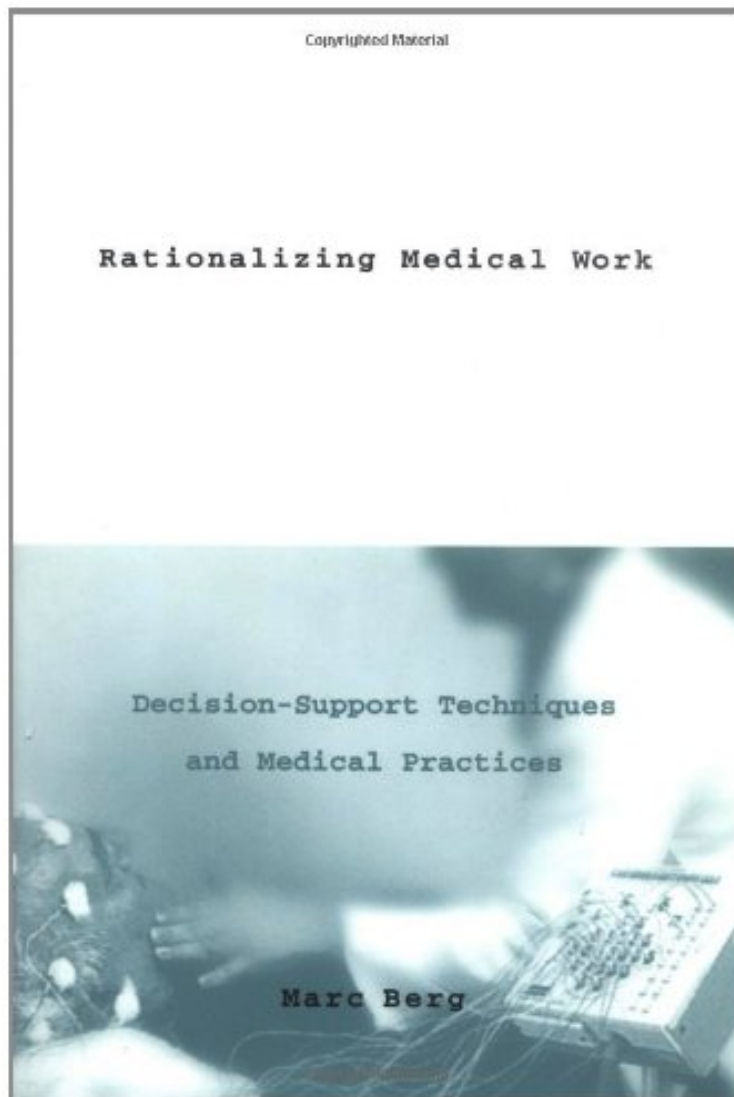


[Free pdf] Rationalizing Medical Work: Decision Support Techniques and Medical Practices (Inside Technology)

## Rationalizing Medical Work: Decision Support Techniques and Medical Practices (Inside Technology)

*Marc Berg*

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**Marc Berg : Rationalizing Medical Work: Decision Support Techniques and Medical Practices (Inside Technology)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Rationalizing Medical Work: Decision Support Techniques and Medical Practices (Inside Technology):

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book (The Journal of the American Medical Association , Volume: 278 , Number: 11 , Page: 950(1) Sep 17, 1997). The bottom line of the review seems to be that the book is very dense (takes time and thought to read it) but worth the time and trouble. I'm going to buy a copy and will comment after I read it myself. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Highly recommended By A Customer This was a book waiting to be written. Marc Berg discusses the turn to rationalization in medicine with exciting case-studies. The theoretical arguments are subtle and require a close reading but highly influential. Part of the intellectual off-spring of Bruno Latour and Donna Haraway. I use this book in my medical sociology and technology course. 2 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Must be read with a shovel. By welsh@ucsd.edu (Barney Welsh) I'm no slouch, but this book is really tough to get through. The author makes a difficult subject even more so with his overly erudite writing style, long sentences, and obscure references. A good editor might have helped a lot.

One response to the current crisis in medicine -- indicated by large variations in practice and skyrocketing costs -- has been a call for the rationalizing of medical practice through decision-support techniques. These tools, which include protocols, decision analysis, and expert systems, have generated much debate. Advocates argue that the tools will make medical practice more rational, uniform, and efficient: that they will transform the "art" of medical work into a "science." Critics within medicine, as well as those in philosophy and science studies, question the feasibility and desirability of the tools. They argue that formal tools cannot and should not supplant humans in most real-life tasks. Marc Berg takes the issues raised by advocates and critics as points of departure for investigation, rather than as positions to choose from. Drawing on insights and methodologies from science and technology studies, he attempts to understand what "rationalizing medical practices" means: what these tools do and how they work in concrete medical practices. Rather than take a stand for or against decision-support techniques, he shows how medical practices are transformed through these tools; this helps the reader to see what is gained and what is lost. The book investigates how new discourses on medical work and its problems are linked to the development of these tools, and it studies the construction of several individual technologies. It looks at what medical work consists of and how these new technologies figure in and transform the work. Although the book focuses on decision-support techniques in the field of medicine, the issues raised are relevant wherever rationalizing techniques are being debated or constructed. Touching upon broader issues of standardization, universality, localization, and the politics of technology, the book addresses core problems in medical sociology, technology studies, and tool design.

Berg's superbly well-written book makes a brilliant contribution to work in both information systems design and the sociology of science and technology. He has combined a deep understanding of medical information systems with a clear sociological gaze to produce a book which should be read by anyone interested in how information systems work. The tension between local and global is core to our times: this work provides us all with some fresh tools to think with. (Geoffrey C. Bowker, Associate Professor, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) Is medicine a science or an art? Marc Berg's contribution to this long-standing debate moves away from normative arguments replacing them with an ethnographic inquiry that goes to the heart of medical work. Berg's analysis leads to a provocative new understanding of the practice of medicine and of medical judgment, grounded in a detailed empirical account rather than simplistic generalizations. (Alberto Cambrosio, Department of Social Studies of Medicine, McGill University) About the Author Marc Berg is on the research staff of the Institute of Health Policy and Management at Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam.