Robert H. Austin, Princeton University

“The Physics of Cancer: Love Lies Bleeding in the Sand”

Cancer is an ancient malady that has proved remarkably resistant to repeated “wars” over the past 100 years. In spite of enormous efforts, the mortality rates have remained basically flat, except for a few exceptions. The National Cancer Institute, in response to the economic threat posed by cancer as our population ages, launched a pioneering Physical Sciences Oncology Centers program to try and enlist physicists and mathematicians at a high level to rethink cancer and come up with new ideas from the physical sciences. After 5 short years that program is ending, and I will claim that that the oncology community basically rejected what the physicists had to say, and are reverting back to the “shock and awe” approach to try and cure cancer rather than confront the phenomena from a deeper, evolutionary perspective. I will claim that cancer is basically preventable, but not curable.