

PostScript

BOOK REVIEWS

Statistical analysis of epidemiologic data, 3rd ed

S Selvin. Oxford University Press, £39.95, pp 492. ISBN 0-19-517280-9

This considerably updated edition contains common procedures and methods that are difficult to find in a single textbook. All the procedures are interestingly illustrated with one or more examples.

The first chapter is dedicated to measures of risk (rate, risk, incidence, and prevalence). A difference with other similar textbooks is the inclusion in the chapter of basic measures in survival analysis and its relations with other common risk measures in epidemiology. An introduction to smoothing, adjusting, and transforming is also offered. Chapter 2 considers variation and bias from a statistical point of view. It begins with the definition of a simple model to compare two groups, and an explanation of how selection bias, ecological bias and, confounding can be assessed. After that the model is extended, interaction contrasts are defined to end with the measurement of misclassification bias. The third chapter deals with statistical power and sample size, in which explanations for most common situations in epidemiology are offered. Chapter 4 (cohort data) is mainly dedicated to cohort effect and how to measure it with several examples. The analysis of spatial data is described in chapter 5, where details of the most common methods are given: nearest neighbour, transformed maps, spatial distribution about a point, and

time/distance spatial analysis. Chapter 6 displays the analysis of contingency tables ($2 \times k$ and $2 \times 2 \times 2$) and it is mainly focused in the testing of homogeneity and independence of data. The methods of logistic regression are clearly shown in chapters 7 and 8, starting with the simplest case and ending with the problem of collinearity. The Poisson model is fully described in chapter 9 and appendix B. Chapter 10 deals with the analysis of matched data and the last chapters explain in a useful way survival analysis.

For a full understanding of the text an intermediate level in biostatistics and epidemiology is required. The book is a useful tool for teachers, doctoral students, and professionals who need a more thorough understanding of common statistical procedures in epidemiology and public health.

M Delgado-Rodriguez

Building better health. A handbook of behavioural change

C David Jenkins. Pan American Health Organisation of the World Health Organisation, 2003, pp 378. ISBN 92-75-11590-7

An understanding of health promotion is an essential foundation for all health professionals. Building better health focuses on the themes of disease/illness prevention via health promotion and integrates theory with practise. The book is divided into five parts; laying the foundation, improving health throughout the lifecycle, better understanding of the leading forms of death and disability, intervening more effectively, and the epilogue. The initial chapters concentrate on the imperative for health promotion

setting out the economic and moral standpoint. In particular emphasis is placed on the importance of engaging the community in improving health. The multiplicities of factors that have an impact on health are discussed. From this point the book examines health issues across the lifecycle from pre-natal care to old age. Throughout these sections practical examples are provided that could be applied in many settings. Chapters related to effective interventions provide a useful background to the theory of behaviour change. The array of references could be further used to explore this complex area. The importance of working with communities to achieve change is a central tenant of the book with the proposal that "convenience, convenience, convenience" should be the mantra to aid community participation. The final part of the book provides an interesting discussion of the dilemma of prevention compared with treatment.

The book will appeal to a wide audience with an interest in health and health promotion. The format enables the reader to focus on a particular section if so desired, but is also sufficiently user friendly to enable it to be read from cover to cover. The book is global in appeal as the examples used are from across the world in preference to many that concentrate solely on health impacts in the western world.

Catherine Pritchard

CORRECTION

An editorial error occurred in this article by Dr Salerno (2005;59:767). The email address in the credit line should be odtstore@odt.org [not odtstore@aol.com].