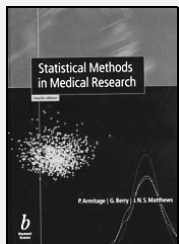


Must-have statistics



Statistical methods in medical research. 4th edition. P Armitage, G Berry, J N S Mathews. Oxford: Blackwell Science, 2002 (xi + 817 pp, \$193.60). ISBN 0 632 05257 0.

THE CHANCE OF REVIEWING the new edition of this classic text came just at the right time, as my first edition copy had finally started to disintegrate. My introduction to medical statistics, or indeed any statistics apart from a brief encounter with experimental error assessment, came with the opportunity to sit in on Peter Armitage's lectures at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine in 1971. These lectures formed the basis of his book, and since then each edition has improved and expanded considerably on the last, keeping pace with the ever-changing field of medical statistics and adding new co-authors on the way.

The book has been reorganised since the last edition, including, among other changes, new sections on permutation and Monte Carlo methods, non-linear regression and multilevel modelling, and also expanding the sections on Bayesian methods and clinical trials.

This book is about methods and their application and is aimed at the practitioner, but it is also suitable for anyone with an interest in statistics. It could be read as a unified text and could form the basis of a practice-oriented course, but it is most likely to be dipped into as required. The subject index appears extensive and exhaustive. There is also an excellent author index which helps to track down the context of any of the wide-ranging set of references. The authors do not present any mathematical theory; rather, they concentrate on commonsense explanation and justification for the techniques and methods that they describe, and these are accompanied by plenty of worked examples. They also direct readers to appropriate statistical software.

This book belongs on the shelf of anyone who uses or needs to understand anything about medical statistics, and will be constantly on loan from library shelves.

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Travel medicine — up to speed



International travel and health. Geneva: World Health Organisation, 2002 (viii + 193 pp, \$43). ISBN 92 4 158027 5.

THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION has a measure of credibility when it comes to producing a book called *International travel and health*. Although this book is updated annually, in some years the most significant difference has seemed to be the change of colour to the stripe on the cover. The 2002 edition, though, is different!

The book has almost doubled in size, the cover has changed from the traditional yellow to a modern teal and, most significantly, there has been a change in the content. The claim on the cover of “abundant new material” is true. The list of acknowledgements reads like a “who’s who” of travel medicine and their input has made the book up to date and value for money.

A diverse range of travel medicine topics are dealt with, from the traditional to the more unusual. Vaccinations, malaria, medical kits, altitude, deep vein thrombosis, jetlag, flight phobia, stings, worms, drownings, traffic accidents, muggings, travelling when pregnant, or with pre-existing medical conditions, and even risks from aircraft disinfection, ozone and cosmic radiation, are all dealt with. There is a particularly useful reference section summarising aspects of the infectious diseases that pose risks to travellers.

The book is organised logically with an extensive table of contents, index, excellent headings, and plenty of tables. The 12 maps in the centre give an excellent overview of the extent of various diseases in 2001 (eg, Japanese encephalitis, dengue, yellow fever, malaria, hepatitis A, B and C, rabies). The popular “Country List” remains — it outlines the current vaccination requirements and malaria situation for each country. This has limited value given the static nature of the publication, but takes up only 26 pages in a publication of 180 pages, so it does not detract too much from its general usefulness.

This 2002 edition is a great leap forward!

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