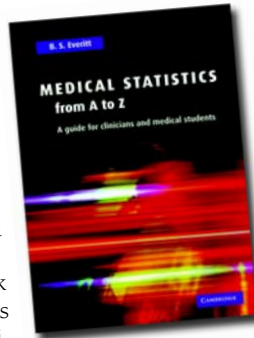


Accessible statistics

Medical statistics from A to Z. A guide for clinicians and medical students. B S Everitt. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003 (vi + 230 pp, \$69.95). ISBN 0 521 53204 3.

MEDICAL RESEARCH ARTICLES are increasingly populated by statistical terminology. Many non-statistical readers of the literature would therefore value a resource providing a quick sense of the broad meaning of statistical terms. This book is such a resource, written by a respected world expert on medical statistics.

Don't expect a textbook. Despite its title, this book will not teach you medical statistics from A to Z. It is written in dictionary style, with bite-sized, non-technical references to an extensive range of topics relevant to the application of statistics in medicine and public health. Each entry provides a few lines of information, sufficient for a quick exposure to the term's meaning. This will leave some readers wanting more, so references to further reading are provided for many of the terms. This is one of the best features of the book, greatly expanding its usefulness. The book can be effectively used as a first point of reference, and as a pointer to a wider and more in-depth body of literature.



More than 1500 terms are covered in just over 200 pages. At one end of the spectrum are items such as “relative risk”, for which the terms, but not necessarily the meanings, may already be known to the reader. At the other end are terms of a more esoteric statistical nature, to which many readers will have had little exposure. This feature, combined with the alphabetical ordering, means that readers will find themselves wandering from their chosen term to other previously unfamiliar concepts. For example, referencing the advantages and disadvantages of a “multicentre study” will lead to an overview of “multicollinearity”, while those wanting to brush up on “age standardisation” will soon find themselves exposed to “agglomerative hierarchical clustering methods”.

The back cover proclaims that *Medical statistics from A to Z* will be a lifesaver for doctors and students alike. Whether or not this is true, the book is a genuine timesaver — a quick reference for a plethora of medical statistics terms and an efficient pointer to more in-depth literature.

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