

Medical statistics from A to Z: a guide for clinicians and medical students

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Cambridge University Press, The Edinburgh Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 2RU, United Kingdom

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This book is designed as a reference text of terms arising from the use and application of statistics in clinical and medical research. More than 1500 terms are concisely defined with explanations given on their relevance and usage. The scope is broad-based covering terminology in the areas of technical statistical methods, applied statistics, clinical trials and meta-analysis, epidemiology, demography, human genetics, and other relevant areas of medical research. References to terms are given as appropriate and, on occasions, with the expressed opinion—in quotation form at times—of the author as to their use in practice.

I recommend this book as a useful reference text that provides a user-friendly guide on terminology em-

ployed in the field of medical statistics. It should be useful for medical students, clinicians, and even medical researchers.

In summarising my review of this book, I conclude with the following quote found on page 173, which to me embodies the spirit of the volume “*P*-values without accompanying confidence intervals are like *Wise* without *Morecambe* or *Frasier* without *Myles*.”

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Obstetrics, gynaecology and women's health: a woman's perspective

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Cambridge University Press, The Edinburgh Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 2RU, United Kingdom

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The intended readers of this book include students and practising clinicians caring for women. The book is organised very differently from traditional textbooks in obstetrics and gynaecology. The first part of the book, entitled ‘Women's health’, comprises almost one quarter of the content. It covers topics like gender and health, ethnics and women's health, women in minority groups, lifestyle issues, body image, loss and grief, and death and dying. This section sets the scene for the rest of the book, which is divided into sections on early life, the reproductive years, the middle years and the older years. Details of various diseases are discussed at the relevant section. The last part of the book is dedicated to surgical, medical and research issues.

Apart from the organisation, the most striking difference between this book and a traditional textbook is its emphasis on psychosocial issues. Therefore, in the section on adolescence, there is information on engaging the adolescent. The passages dealing with various diseases are concise and up-to-date. For example, in the section on the management of uterine fibroids, uterine artery embolisation is mentioned.

Its place in relation to other modalities of treatment is described as “needs more collaborative studies, particularly RCT's comparing it with other surgical procedures.” It is also unusual for an undergraduate textbook to contain a bibliography of 34 pages! This, in itself, is a good reflection of the principles of evidence-based medicine.

The book also contains 13 pages of colour photos covering various obstetric and gynaecological conditions. The photos are of very good quality, even though they are not that large in size. These photos help to supplement and broaden the clinical exposure of the students.

On the whole, instruction on the more practical clinical skills is sufficient. A detailed, step-by-step account of history-taking and physical examination is included. Regrettably, it is impossible to include all of the information each individual considers essential. For instance, I would have included information on how to assess the size of the uterus bimanually. Other information, such as the need to rotate the Cervex brush five times clockwise when using it to take a cervical smear, would also have been

helpful. I happened to look out for information on these issues because they are often raised by my students.

The book was edited by Dr O'Connor of the University of Queensland and Prof Kovacs of the Monash University. All of the contributors worked in the western world. A gap between the local context and the content of the book is therefore unavoidable. However, this is also the case for all textbooks written in the West and the gap would have to be closed by local medical teachers.

My primary concern lies with the organisation of the book. I can understand the advantage of its chronological arrangement—it reflects the variation of clinical presentation and management in relation to the person's life cycle. However, by placing the information on pre-cancer and cancer in the middle years section, an unwary student may forget to include cancer in the differential diagnosis of an

older woman, or a younger woman in the reproductive years. This may just be the unfounded anxiety of a very traditional-minded obstetrician and gynaecologist. After all, there may not be an ideal method of organisation without any drawback.

In conclusion, I think the book does satisfy what its editors wanted to achieve as stated in the preface. It is a very good textbook for medical students, especially in the light of the changing emphasis in a modern obstetrics and gynaecology curriculum. The book can also serve as a quick reference for family physicians.

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