
As the world of evidence-based medicine evolves, more health care professionals are faced with the need to collect and present their own research evidence. Clinicians usually find the subject of statistics dry and difficult, and often have to learn the basic principals as they go along in the research process. The arrival of ‘easy to use’ statistical software has helped to shorten this learning process, but this has given rise to another hurdle, which is, taking the results of analyses performed and converting them to a presentable article, report, thesis or dissertation. The aid of a friendly statistician is indeed valuable, but may not be available at all times. This book comes close to tackling all the practical issues that health care professionals and researchers in medicine grapple with in the entire research process from the development of the research proposal, to applying for ethical approval, to analysing the data and eventually writing and presenting the results. However, the researcher would need at least a more than basic level of knowledge of statistical principles and software to fully utilize and appreciate this book.

The title itself gives the reader an idea of its practical use. The layout is clear and concise with perfect indexing for use as a quick reference guide. It is user-friendly, providing detailed descriptions as well as summary boxes to enable the reader quick access to different levels of detail required. Useful references to books, journal articles and websites are listed for topics which are not covered in detail.

The book kicks-off with a particularly neat introduction to the research process; starting with how to write a research protocol, writing the research study itself as well as guidelines on writing for different media. It guides the reader on how to perform and calculate sample sizes before launching into how to present a wide range of statistical analyses. There are handy illustrations of Stata and SPSS commands needed23 to obtain the analyses which are performed on examples of previously published trials. The information generated and extracted from the output is then translated into a presentation or a written report. Useful discussions on the merits of Stata and SPSS in tackling different types of analyses are included, with recommendations of alternative software to be used, should the analyses fall beyond the scope of Stata and SPSS. The concluding chapter takes the reader through a very thorough checklist and summary on the CONSORT (Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials) statement for presenting a randomized controlled trial.

I thoroughly recommend this book to the young undergraduate or postgraduate researcher, particularly if you are doing a PhD. It is also valuable for more experienced healthcare researchers applying for research ethics approval, for example.

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