

Simple Biostatistics for MBBS, PG Entrance and USMLE. Authors: A. Indrayan and L. Satyanarayana. *Academa Publishers, 1329, Ground Floor, Vaidwara, Maliwara, Nai Sarak, Delhi 110 006. First Edition, 2003, pages 256, Price Rs. 195/-.*

Conventionally, majority of the doctors have viewed biostatistics as a difficult subject, which is preferably avoided. An important reason for this attitude is the manner in which the subject is taught in the classroom and the books. Often undue emphasis is placed on the mathematical aspects while ignoring the fundamental principles and the direct relevance of the subject to practice of medicine. In the current era, a basic knowledge of medical statistics has become indispensable for undergraduate, postgraduate and competitive examinations; thesis writing; research; and evidence based medicine. The need for a cheap, simple and easy to understand monograph on the subject is evident.

“Simple Biostatistics” unfolds the subject in a unique style, particularly through responses to the inquisitive demands of a hypothetical student “Dr. Science Singh, MD”. This novel format, eternally blended with the relevance to medical practice, contributes substantially to a compelling reading. The perpetual fear of remembering complicated formulas and proofs is dispelled while the basic principles are highlighted. Explanations and examples are liberally inserted to retain interest in the topic.

The contents have a systematic flow with a sensible division into eleven chapters. The introductory chapter clarifies how uncertainties in medicine due to various variabilities can be understood and managed with the help of Biostatistics. Later chapters provide a helpful insight into the available sources for medical

data and ways of generating new data. The new data generating designs clearly distinguish the role of sampling between descriptive and analytical types of objectives. The apt description of data collection methods and types also contains a useful deliberation on the validity and reliability of diagnostic tests. The reader is exposed to the crux of condensation and understanding data in the sections on methods of summarization and types of relationships. The coherent explanation of the underlying philosophy of the “magical P values”, standard errors, confidence intervals and tests of significance deserves special appreciation.

Additional features enhance the utility of this book. Each chapter contains “simple tips” as a summary for rapid revision. The exercises including multiple-choice questions at the end of each chapter and their solutions in the appendix are helpful for evaluating understanding. The glossary at the end of the book provides a quick scan of the terms used. The formulae sheet in the appendix would appeal to the mathematically oriented reader. Despite being elementary in its exposition, the book emerges as a dependable companion for undergraduate examination, postgraduate entrance and USMLE competition. The topics included for the purpose of USMLE are clearly demarcated.

The high quality of production at a fairly affordable cost needs to be complimented. The book is strongly recommended for undergraduates, postgraduates, epidemiologists and researchers. It will also prove to be a valuable resource for teachers.

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