Book Review

Medical Statistics from A to Z. B. S. Everitt. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Pp. 230 + 84 illustrations, £55.00 hb. ISBN 0-521-82506-7.

Just as medical statisticians find, when reading papers in medical journals, that they may need to look up the meaning of several medical terms in the text, so do those with a mainly biological or medical background, who may find the terminology baffling, need to look up definitions of statistical terms.

As the title suggests, this guide provides definitions and explanations for a range of statistical and epidemiological terms used in the field of medical statistics. A short description or example of a medical application of the terminology listed in this guide has been given where appropriate, along with illustrations of graphs used to present data. Everitt's reference books are well read and respected by medical researchers and medical statisticians alike. In particular, *Statistics in the Medical Sciences* is one of the essential books on the shelf of many a medical statistician. This book, *Medical Statistics from A to Z*, is aimed at clinicians and medical students and as such, is much less technical than *Statistics in the Medical Sciences*. The emphasis here is on providing a brief but understandable explanation of familiar and sometimes not so familiar terms, used to describe medical data analysis. This has mostly been achieved and there are no important omissions. Descriptions of the more statistical terms such as those relating to distributions and methods of analysis are brief, as would be expected in this type of guide, but further sources of information are given.

In a short guide such as this, it was not of course possible or intended to provide detailed examples of statistical expressions and measures of effect. However, for the researcher with a medical background, Everitt's book is very good as a first point of reference. In some cases, the entries in this book would be all that is required to help a clinician or medical student understand some of the terminology or graphs in a journal paper. It does not provide the reader with an understanding of medical statistics, but would and does complement a good introductory text book.

If only a reference book or dictionary of medical terms could be so concise and understandable for the more statistically minded individuals amongst us …

TANSY EDWARDS