Editor's Letter

Mike Larsen,
Executive Editor

Dear Readers,

This issue of *CHANCE* contains articles about history, probability, statistical modeling, messy data, risk, graphics, and sports. Actually, several of the articles concern sports in one context or another. The sports articles are not just for the sports enthusiast, however. These articles explore diverse statistical topics and methods and illustrate a variety of concerns in probability and statistics.

The first couple of articles concern historical themes and the development of statistical practice. Brian Clauser discusses the relationship between R. A. Fisher and Karl Pearson and the impact of strict adherence to set significance levels for hypothesis testing. The author suggests personal relations, copyright restrictions, and economic conditions related to World War I influenced the format of tables and subsequent statistical practice. The 'file drawer problem' and the registration of clinical trials prior to initiation are two related modern issues. In a related article, Stephen Stigler presents his view of the origin of the 5% significance level standard for hypothesis testing.

As I mentioned, many articles have sports themes. Two international contributions concern winter sports. Moudud Alam, Kenneth Carling, Rui Chen, and Yuli Liang investigate the progression of young skiers in Sweden. Their growth curve modeling adjusts for age and gender effects and produces individualized evaluations of progress. It is conceivable that such methods would be useful in health or education studies. Three of the authors of this paper are graduate students.

Bill Hurley's sports example is the National Hockey League. His substantive topic is the birthday matching problem and probability calculations. Did you know birthdays of hockey players in the NHL are becoming increasingly nonuniform? Read the article to find out why and what impact this has on probability calculations.

Rachel Croson, Peter Fishman, and Devin Pope compare golf and poker. Is poker a game primarily of skill or of luck? The authors confront the difficulty of answering this question when data are available on only the top players.

Philip Price discusses a variant of a betting pool for college basketball's March Madness single elimination tournament. Here, there are data that could be useful in estimating probabilities, expectations, and variability. These data and the questions raised in the article could be used to motivate teaching introductory concepts. Can your students devise a better strategy?

Brian Schmotzer examines the relation of leads and time remaining to the eventual winner of a college basketball game. The data are noisy, so the author employs smoothing techniques. He then translates solutions into simple rules and equations that you can use in real time. Katherine McGivney, Ray McGivney, and Ralph Zegarelli address the same question, but for professional basketball. The authors employ logistic regression models to describe the performance of simple rules. Simulation is used to further evaluate the rules. Both articles are possible only because the authors made considerable efforts to produce usable data.

In Mark Glickman's Here's to Your Health column, Stephanie Land critically comments on failings of risk perception and the challenge of effectively communicating risks. Clear comparative graphical presentations of risk are part of her story.

In the Visual Revelations column, Paul Velleman and Howard Wainer take a look at blood sugar measurements and diabetes. The data here are for one individual. Outliers and trends are investigated in detail. In this article, teachers of statistics will find comparisons of measures of center and examples of smoothing noisy time-varying data.

The issue is completed with a new puzzle from Jonathan Berkowitz in his Goodness of Wit Test column and the announcement of a *CHANCE* graphics contest. As always, a one-year (extension of your) subscription to *CHANCE* will be awarded for each of two correct puzzle solutions chosen at random from among those received by the deadline. The graphics contest similarly will award one-year (extensions of) subscriptions to winners as described in the announcement. We look forward to your puzzle and graphics entries!

And, as always, I look forward to your comments, suggestions, and article submissions.

Enjoy the issue!
Mike Larsen