

Editor's Letter

Mike Larsen,
Executive Editor



Dear Readers,

The two themes of this issue of *CHANCE* are baseball and graphics. Mark Glickman's Here's to Your Health column, Jonathan Berkowitz's Goodness of Wit Test puzzle column, and a couple of letters to the editor complete the issue.

For the baseball lover, there are three articles. For statisticians in general, issues of defining measures of performance, selecting a comparison group, adjusting for confounders, and modeling also appear in these articles. Jim Albert compares the career trajectories of pitchers. The rate at which pitchers allow hits and walks, adjusted for the pool of pitches and number of batters, is modeled using piecewise quadratic functions. Flexible, multilevel modeling is used to create individual trajectories that adjust for important factors and allow nuanced comparisons across pitchers. Did drugs play a role in Roger Clemens' later career performance? Brian Schmotzer, Pat Kilgo, and Jeff Switchenko estimate the effect of performance-enhancing drugs on offensive production in baseball. The outcome measure is runs created per 27 outs. Information about drug use comes from the "Mitchell Report." To address sensitivity to the statistical model, several models are estimated and contrasted.

Finally, Don Chance takes a look at Joe DiMaggio's 1941 56-game hitting streak. Adjusting for hit opportunities and making other assumptions, does DiMaggio have the highest probability of ever having such a streak?

The three winners of the Will Burtin graphics contest (announced in Volume 21, Issue 4) are Mark Nicolich, Dibyojyoti Haldar, and Brian Schmotzer. Their graphs and biographies begin on Page 43. Howard Wainer's Visual Revelations column presents several additional graphs and examines the lessons learned through the contest. We wish to thank the 64 entrants to the contest for their efforts. Based on the positive response to the contest, we plan to conduct a similar one in the near future.

In Mark Glickman's Here's to Your Health column, Xiaofei Wang, Herbert Pang, and Todd Schwartz study cancer biomarkers: What are they? How are they used for prediction and classification? What role can statisticians/biostatisticians play in design, modeling, and validation?

In his Goodness of Wit Test puzzle column, Jonathan Berkowitz gives us a bar-type cryptic puzzle with one additional solving requirement.

Last, but not least, two readers submitted letters. Susan Aref comments on Stephanie Land's article (Volume 21, Number 4), "'We All Survived' and Other Failings of Risk Perception," and confirms that it is, indeed, safer to be born now than in the past. Ray Stefani discusses efforts to reproduce results from tables discussed in articles, also in Volume 21, Number 4, by Brian Clauser and Stephen Stigler. The details presented here could be of use to instructors and others working to understand and explain the tables.

In other news, *CHANCE*, working through the American Statistical Association (ASA), conducted a survey of lapsed subscribers. Approval for the survey was obtained from the ASA's Survey Review Committee. An email message with a link to a web survey was sent to individuals who had let their subscription to *CHANCE* expire in the last few years. The purpose of the survey was to learn something about why people stopped subscribing and what they liked or disliked about *CHANCE*.

Forty-four former subscribers responded. According to them, the technical level is about right and the amount and quality of graphics are acceptable, although there appears to be some room for improvement. Topics of highest interest were current events, education, environment, and health/medical. Other topics of strong interest were clinical trials, economics, government, graphics, legal issues, and surveys. One respondent added the following comment: "I want to see interesting applications. The area doesn't matter."

In summary, we interpret the results of the survey to support the mission of *CHANCE*: provide accessible and interesting articles on diverse topics in which probability and statistics play critical roles. I look forward to your comments, suggestions, and article submissions.

Enjoy the issue!
Mike Larsen