

Toward a New Statistics Terminology

In an article in the *Journal of Irreproducible Results*, Sherman Chottiner has tried to put a friendlier face on the dry subject of statistics. In his words, "Statistics is in dire need of a new terminology. Who could like a subject that names one of its most important concepts 'mean'? Who could respect a subject whose researchers spend a lifetime studying 'normal deviates'?"

Here are some statistical terms that should be dropped and their suggested replacements. (To be continued in the next issue of *CBE Views*.)

DEPARTMENT OF PONDEROUS PROSE

Can you translate the passage below into simple English?

As a case in point, other authorities have proposed that slumbering canines are best left in a recumbent position.

(Answer on page 31)

Statistical term	New term	Comments
Mean	Nice	This is the most important change, since it alters the tone from "mean-ness" to "niceness and civility." "Very nice" could be used for large values.
<i>P</i> value	—	Completely eliminate this term. Statistics should not have any vulgar references. For the same reason, <i>P</i> should not be used as the symbol for probability. In fact, all probability should be eliminated; henceforth, statistics will be based on behavioral, or touchy-feely, methods.
ANOVA	GRANOLA	Tastes better.
Null hypothesis	Grandiose hypothesis	It is about time we thought about the greatness, rather than the nothingness, of statistics.
Multicollinearity	—	Eliminate all reference to this term. It is too long.

From Chottiner, Sherman. *Statistics: Toward a Kinder, Gentler Subject*. Reprinted by permission from the *Journal of Irreproducible Results*, 1990;35(6):14.

The Lighter View consists of short articles, cartoons, quotations, or any other type of humorous material about the editing life. We invite you to make suggestions and contribute material that you find humorous. Send ideas to Barbara Cox, MedEdit Associates, 5429 SW 80 Street, Gainesville FL 32608. Phone (9 AM to 4 PM EST, Monday through Friday) 352-376-3071; fax 352-336-8377.