

Short Course on Statistics to Debut

Jessica Ancker, Education Committee Chair

How can we identify garbled statistics in a scientific article? What does a P value really mean? When is it time to seek a statistical reviewer?

Those are some of the questions that short-course participants have asked at previous CSE meetings, and in response CSE is pleased to announce a new short course on statistics for editors. The course will be presented on 21 May, immediately before the 2005 annual meeting in Atlanta, Georgia (20-24 May 2005).

The aim of this unique course will be to help participants read, understand, report, and edit basic statistical analyses—not to perform statistical analyses or to become statistical reviewers. This

approach is expected to address the workplace concerns of editors and reviewers more directly than would an academic statistics course.

The course will begin with a section on basic descriptive statistics. In this portion only, participants will be invited to perform elementary calculations. The remainder of the course will consist of demonstrations that focus on concepts, rather than mathematics, and discussion about interpreting, rewording, and presenting the results.

Other topics will include confidence intervals, hypothesis-testing and P values, relative risks and odds ratios, randomized clinical trials, and specificity and sensitivity of diagnostic tests. Good and bad examples will be drawn from scientific journals and the lay press.

Jessica Ancker will direct the course. A former medical editor at the Cleveland Clinic, she earned her master's degree in biostatistics from Columbia University and regularly teaches "statistics for nonstatisticians" courses and gives "statistics in the news" lectures at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism. She is currently in the PhD program at Columbia's School of Public Health, where she is studying communication and decision-making about complex health information.

Registration for the short course on statistics for editors, as well as for the other short courses, will open early in 2005. Check www.CouncilScienceEditors.org for up-to-date information.