

THE STATISTICAL CONSULTANT



Section on Statistical Consulting
Christopher Holloman, Editor; Sarah Butler, Assistant Editor

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JSM 2010, Vancouver, BC: Section Business Meeting, Sessions, and Roundtables Sponsored by CNSL

Walter T. Ambrosius, Wake Forest University School of Medicine¹

This year, our section is sponsoring three invited sessions, two topic contributed sessions, one contributed session, one contributed poster session, and four roundtable discussions. Full details, including all abstracts, can be seen at

<http://www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2010/onlineprogram/index.cfm>.

You'll also find several sessions that our section is co-sponsoring.

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Section Business Meeting

- **Tuesday 5:30-7:00pm.**

Invited Sessions

- Improving the Dialogue Between the Consulting Statisticians and Nonstatisticians (e.g., Clinicians, Scientists, Regulators, and Marketers) in the Case of Nonstandard Applications. *Organized by Birol Emir, Pfizer Inc.* **Sunday 2:00-3:50pm.**
- Why I Took the Red Pill: Four Consulting Statisticians Discuss Making a Difference in the Real World. *Organized by Doug Zahn, Zahn & Associates.* **Monday 8:30-10:20am.**
- Statistics and Development of Personalized Medicines. *Organized by Ruixiao Lu, Novartis Vaccines and Diagnostics.* **Wednesday 8:30-10:10am.**

Topic Contributed Sessions

- Statistics in the Community: Present and Future. *Organized by Jonathan Hobbs, Iowa State University.* **Sunday 4:00-5:50pm.**
- Consulting for Translational Research: Emerging Issues and Recommendations. *Organized by Wei-Ting Hwang, University of Pennsylvania.* **Tuesday 2:00-3:50pm.**

Contributed Session

- Topics in Statistical Consulting. *Chaired by Page Moore, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.* **Monday 2:00-3:50pm.**

Contributed Poster Session

- **Tuesday 2:00-3:50pm.**

Roundtable Discussions

- Cross-Pharma Statistical Innovations. *Led by Herbert Thijs, I-Biostat.* **Monday 7:00-8:15am.**
 - Preparation of Statisticians for the Needs of Industry. *Led by Guowen (Gordon) Sun, Sanofi-Aventis.* **Monday 12:30-1:50pm.**
 - How Do Statisticians Become Members of the Development Team from the Beginning of the Lifecycle? *Led by Amarjot Kaur, Merck & Co., Inc.* **Tuesday 12:30-1:50pm.**
 - Investigator Evaluation and the Collaborative/Consulting Experience. *Led by Rhonda VanDyke, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center.* **Wednesday 7:00-8:15am.**
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Winners of the 2010 Travel Awards

Walter T. Ambrosius, Wake Forest University School of Medicine²

Congratulations to the winners of the 2010 travel awards to the JSM in Vancouver, BC! Each winner will receive a \$700 check to cover travel expenses, presented at the section business meeting.

The winners are:

- Wei-Ting Hwang, University of Pennsylvania, “Consulting for Translational Research: Emerging Issues and Recommendations.”
 - Jonathan Hobbs, Iowa State University, “Statistics in the Community: Present and Future.”
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Professional Liability Insurance – Advice from the Membership

Christopher Holloman, The Ohio State University³

On July 3, 2010, the CNSL listserv was very active with a discussion about professional liability insurance for statistical consultants. I have summarized the key advice and ideas put forth by various members.

The discussion focused primarily around whether it is worthwhile for statistical consultants to purchase their own professional liability insurance. Several members stated that they had never heard of a statistician being sued for malpractice, suggesting that there is a very low probability of ever needing to make a claim against the insurance if it is purchased. In addition, one member pointed out that it would be very difficult to prove a case of statistical malpractice, so the risk of being successfully sued is even smaller. However, other members raised a few points that suggest purchasing insurance might be worthwhile. First, although the risk of being sued may be very small, the results of a negative outcome to the lawsuit could be devastating. One member stated that recent changes in HIPAA rules might make statisticians liable for accidental disclosures of protected medical information, and the resulting financial liability could be in the tens of thousands of dollars. Second, while the risk of being sued might appear to be small based on the available anecdotal evidence, we really have no scientific basis for establishing an estimate. Since the community of independent statistical consultants is small, it is possible that the risk could be large enough to justify a purchase of insurance.

If you do decide to acquire professional liability insurance, there are many options to consider. It is worthwhile to shop around since the price can vary enormously depending on the type of insurance sought and the company providing the insurance. One option is to add a rider to a current homeowner's or renter's policy. A second option suggested is to simply contact an insurance company and acquire a policy for professional liability. During the listserv discussion, it was pointed out that professional liability insurance is different from "errors and omissions" insurance, which is usually more expensive. Finally, two members suggested that it is possible to acquire insurance as part of a group. One possibility is to join the American Health Information Management Association (www.ahima.org), while another possibility is to go through the National Association of the Self Employed (www.nase.org).

Ultimately, it seems that individual circumstances can play a large role in the determination of whether to purchase professional liability insurance. As one member suggested, the key question to answer is whether the cost of the insurance will be offset by the amount of income that can be made from the project for which it's needed. When possible, it may make the most sense to simply require the client to pay the cost of the insurance as part of the contract if they require you to have it.

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Comments from the Chair

Todd Nick, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences⁴

It's mid-July now and the Joint Statistical Meetings are only a few weeks away. Walter Ambrosius, the Program Chair this year, has assembled an outstanding program for this year's JSM in Vancouver. We have 3 invited sessions and 3 contributed session as well as other sessions we are co-sponsoring as a section. To view all of our section's activities at JSM, go to <http://www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2010/index.cfm> and click on the 'View the Online Program.' Then, under 'Search for Sponsor' select 'Section on Statistical Consulting.' You will see all of the section's sessions as well as the round table sessions. The round tables were organized by Richard Ittenbach, the Program Chair Elect, and are well-worth attending. If you are still interested in attending a round table luncheon and you haven't registered yet, there may be some seats available so please check with the registration booth in Vancouver.

Please mark your calendar! The Section Business Meeting and Mixer is open to all section members and is on Tuesday evening, August 3, from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. There will be door prizes galore so please show up at the Convention Centre (CC) room 111/112 (West) and test your luck. This event is an excellent venue to find out more about the section and to share your thoughts and comments about section activities.

If you have any questions about section activities, please feel free to contact me. The best way is via email at tgnick@uams.edu.

Notes from the Editor

Christopher Holloman, The Ohio State University⁵

This month, I'd like to thank Walter Ambrosius, not only for taking the time to put together a summary of the Consulting Section Activities at the JSM 2010 but also for all his hard work in putting together the program. As always, we're happy to take suggestions for future articles, so feel free to send ideas to me or Sarah Butler.

Christopher Holloman, Editor

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**Remember the
Section on Statistical Consulting
website address:**

www.amstat.org/sections/cnsl/

You'll find all information relating to the Section on Statistical Consulting, including our charter, officer list, section activities, past issues of *The Statistical Consultant*, minutes of past meetings, and more.