

Contents

Introduction 1

Clinical Questions and Clinical Epidemiology 2

Health Outcomes 2

The Scientific Basis for Clinical Medicine 3

Basic Principles 5

Variables 6

Numbers and Probability 6

Populations and Samples 6

Bias (Systematic Error) 6

Chance 10

The Effects of Bias and Chance

Are Cumulative 10

Internal and External Validity 11

Information and Decisions 12

Organization of This Book 12

2 Frequency 17

Are Words Suitable Substitutes for Numbers? 17

Prevalence and Incidence 18

Prevalence 18

Incidence 18

Prevalence and Incidence

in Relation to Time 19

Relationships Among Prevalence, Incidence,

and Duration of Disease 19

Some Other Rates 20

Studies of Prevalence and Incidence 20

Prevalence Studies 21

Incidence Studies 21

Cumulative Incidence 21

Incidence Density (Person-Years) 21

Basic Elements of Frequency Studies 22

What Is a Case? Defining

the Numerator 22

What Is the Population? Defining

the Denominator 24

Does the Study Sample Represent the

Population? 25

Distribution of Disease by Time, Place,

and Person 25

Time 25

Place 26

Person 26

Uses of Prevalence Studies 27

What Are Prevalence Studies Good for? 27

What Are Prevalence Studies Not Particularly

Good for? 28

3 Abnormality 31

Types of Data 32

Nominal Data 32

Ordinal Data 32

Interval Data 32

Performance of Measurements 33

Validity 33

Reliability 34

Range 35

Responsiveness 35

Interpretability 35

Variation 36
Variation Resulting from Measurement 36
Variation Resulting from
Biologic Differences 36
Total Variation 37
Effects of Variation 38
Distributions 39
Describing Distributions 39
Actual Distributions 39
The Normal Distribution 39
Criteria for Abnormality 41
Abnormal = Unusual 42
Abnormal = Biologic Dysfunction 43
Abnormal = Illness 45
Abnormal = Treating the Condition Leads to a Better Clinical Outcome 47
Regression to the Mean 48
regression to the Mean 40
4 Diagnosis 53
•
Simplifying Data 53
The Accuracy of a Test Result 54
The Gold Standard 55
Sensitivity and Specificity 55
Definitions 55
Use of Sensitive Tests 55
Use of Specific Tests 57
Trade-Offs Between Sensitivity
and Specificity 57
The Receiver Operator
Characteristic (ROC) Curve 58
Studies of Diagnostic Tests 59
Spectrum of Patients—the Study Population 60
Bias 61
Chance 61
Imperfect Gold Standards 62
Predictive Value 64
Definitions 64
Determinants of Predictive Value 65 Estimating Prevalence (Pretest Probability) 66

Implications for Interpreting the Medical

Literature 68

Likelihood Ratios 68 Odds 68 Definitions 69 Use of Likelihood Ratios 69 Why Use Likelihood Ratios? 69 Calculating Likelihood Ratios 70

Multiple Tests 71

Parallel Testing 72
Clinical Prediction Rules 73
Serial Testing 74
Serial Likelihood Ratios 74
Assumption of Independence 74

5 Risk: Basic Principles 78

Risk Measurement 79
Risk Factors 79
Recognizing Risk Factors 80

Long Latency 80

Immediate Versus Distant Causes 80
Common Exposure to Risk Factors 80
Low Incidence of Disease 81
Small Risk 81
Multiple Causes and Multiple Effects 81

Risk Factors May or May Not Be Causal 81

Risk Prediction Models 82

Combining Multiple Factors 82

Evaluating Risk Prediction Tools 83

Discrimination 83
Calibration 85

Validating Models 86

External Validation 86 Comparing Models 87

Assessing Models in Clinical Practice 87

Risk Stratification 87

Clinical Uses of Risk Factors, Prognostic Factors, and Risk Prediction Tools 88

Risk Prediction and Pretest Probability for Diagnostic Testing 88 Using Risk Factors to Choose Treatment 89 Risk Stratification for Screening Programs 89 Removing Risk Factors to Prevent Disease 89

6 Risk: Exposure to Disease 92

Studies of Risk 92

When Experiments Are Not Possible or Ethical

Cohorts 93

Cohort Studies 93

Prospective and Historical Cohort Studies 94

Advantages and Disadvantages

of Cohort Studies 96

Ways to Express and Compare Risk 98

Absolute Risk 99

Attributable Risk 99

Relative Risk 99

Interpreting Attributable and Relative Risk 99

Population Risk 100

Taking Other Variables into Account 101

Extraneous Variables 101

Simple Descriptions of Risk 101

Confounding 102

Working Definition 102

Potential Confounders 102

Confirming Confounding 102

Control of Confounding 103

Randomization 103

Restriction 103

Matching 104

Stratification 104

Standardization 105

Multivariable Adjustment 105

Overall Strategy for Control of Confounding 106

Observational Studies and Cause 106

Effect Modification 106

Mendelian Randomization 107

Risk: From Disease to Exposure 111

Case-Control Studies 112

Design of Case-Control Studies 114

The Source Population 114

Selecting Cases 114

Selecting Controls 114

Measuring Exposure 116

The Odds Ratio: An Estimate of Relative Risk 118

Odds Ratio Calculation 119

Odds Ratio as an Indirect

Estimate of Relative Risk 119

Odds Ratio as a Direct Estimate

of Relative Risk 120

Controlling for

Extraneous Variables 120

Investigation of a

Disease Outbreak 121

Prognosis 126

Differences in Risk and Prognostic Factors 126

The Patients Are Different 127

The Outcomes Are Different 127

The Rates Are Different 127

The Factors May be Different 127

Clinical Course and Natural History of Disease 127

Elements of Prognostic Studies 127

Patient Sample 127

Zero Time 128

Follow-Up 129

Outcomes of Disease 129

Describing Prognosis 129

A Trade-Off: Simplicity Versus

More Information 129

Survival Analysis 130

Survival of a Cohort 130

Survival Curves 132

Interpreting Survival Curves 133

Identifying Prognostic Factors 133

Case Series 134

Clinical Prediction Rules 134

Bias in Cohort Studies 135

Sampling Bias 136

Migration Bias 136

(ii Contents
Measurement Bias 136 Bias from "Non-differential" Misclassification 137 Bias from Missing Data 137 Bias, Perhaps, But Does It Matter? 137
Sensitivity Analysis 137
mate of Relative Risk 119gs enoitudintelO
9 Treatment 142
deas and Evidence 142
Ideas 142
Testing Ideas 143
Studies of Treatment Effects 144
Observational and Experimental Studies of Treatment Effects 144
Randomized Controlled Trials 144
Ethics 145
Sampling 145
Intervention 147
Comparison Groups 147
Allocating Treatment 148
Differences Arising After Randomization 149

Blinding 150 Assessment of Outcomes 150

Efficacy and Effectiveness 152

Intention-to-Treat and Explanatory Trials 153

Superiority, Equivalence, and Noninferiority Variations on Basic Randomized Trials 155 Tailoring the Results of Trials to Individual Patients 156

Subgroups 156 Effectiveness in Individual Patients 156 N of 1 Trials 156

Alternatives to Randomized Controlled Trials 157

Limitations of Randomized Trials 157 **Observational Studies** of Interventions 157 Clinical Databases 158 Randomized Versus Observational Studies? 158 Phases of Clinical Trials 158

Prevention

Preventive Activities in Clinical Settings 162

Types of Clinical Prevention 163

Levels of Prevention 163

Primary Prevention 163 Secondary Prevention 164 Tertiary Prevention 164 Confusion About Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Prevention 164

Scientific Approach to Clinical Prevention 165 Burden of Suffering 165

Effectiveness of Treatment 166

Treatment in Primary Prevention 166 Treatment in Secondary Prevention 167 Treatment in Tertiary Prevention 168

Methodologic Issues in Evaluating Screening Programs 169

Prevalence and Incidence Screens 169 Special Biases 169

Performance of Screening Tests 172

> High Sensitivity and Specificity 172 **Detection and Incidence Methods** for Calculating Sensitivity 173 Low Positive Predictive Value 174 Simplicity and Low Cost 174 Safety 175 Acceptable to Patients and Clinicians 175

Unintended Consequences of Screening 175

Risk of False-Positive Result 176 Risk of Negative Labeling Effect 176 Risk of Overdiagnosis (Pseudodisease) in Cancer Screening 177 Incidentalomas 178

Changes in Screening Tests and Treatments Over Time 179 Weighing Benefits Against Harms of Prevention 179

11 Chance 185

Two Approaches to Chance 185
Hypothesis Testing 186

False-Positive and False-Negative Statistical Results 186

Concluding That a Treatment Works 186

Dichotomous and Exact P Values 187

Statistical Significance and

Clinical Importance 187

Statistical Tests 188

Concluding That a Treatment

Does Not Work 189

How Many Study Patients Are Enough? 190

Statistical Power 190

Estimating Sample Size Requirements 190

Point Estimates and Confidence Intervals 193

Statistical Power After a Study

Is Completed 194

Detecting Rare Events 194

Multiple Comparisons 194

Subgroup Analysis 196

Multiple Outcomes 197

Noninferiority Studies 198

Multivariable Methods 198

Bayesian Reasoning 200

12 Cause 204

Basic Principles 205

Single Causes 205

Multiple Causes 205

Proximity of Cause to Effect 206

Indirect Evidence for Cause 208

Examining Individual Studies 208

Hierarchy of Research Designs 209

The Body of Evidence for

and Against Cause 209

Does Cause Precede Effect? 210

Strength of the Association 210

Dose-Response Relationships 210

Reversible Associations 211

Consistency 211

Biologic Plausibility 211

Specificity 212

Analogy 212

Aggregate Risk Studies 212

Modeling 214

Weighing the Evidence 216

Summarizing the Evidence 219

Traditional Reviews 219

Systematic Reviews 220

Defining a Specific Question 220

Selecting Studies 221

Assessing Study Quality and Characteristics 223

Summarizing Results 225

Combining Studies in Meta-Analyses 226

Are the Studies Similar Enough to Justify

Combining? 226

How Are the Results Pooled? 227

Identifying Reasons for Heterogeneity 228

Additional Meta-Analysis Methods 229

Patient-Level Meta-Analysis 229

Network Meta-Analysis 230

Cumulative Meta-Analyses 230

Systematic Reviews of Observational and

Diagnostic Studies 231

Strengths and Weaknesses of Meta-Analyses 232

14 Knowledge Management 236

Basic Principles 236

Do It Yourself or Delegate? 236

Which Medium? 237

Grading Information 237

Misleading Reports of Research Findings 237

Looking Up Answers to Clinical Questions 239

Solutions 239

Surveillance on New Developments 241

xiv Contents

Journals 242

"Reading" Journals 243

Guiding Patients' Quest for Health
Information 245

Putting Knowledge Management
into Practice 245

APPENDIX A: ANSWERS TO REVIEW QUESTIONS 249

APPENDIX B: ADDITIONAL READINGS 262

INDEX 265 (R)