

SSA Biostatistics & Bioinformatics Newsletter

Q3 2019

Welcome to the October edition of the Biostatistics and Bioinformatics section newsletter!

This is our third quarterly update of 2019. We aim to keep you updated about our activities of this quarter and highlight the topics that may be of interest to you. Our mailing list keeps growing and comprises 258 people from every state and territory across Australia. 89% report an interest in biostatistics and 39% in bioinformatics. In this newsletter, we are excited to provide you information about the biostatistics and bioinformatics section mentoring program pilot. We also have included feedback from our workshop on gaining skills in biostatistical consultancy, information on upcoming events, meeting one of the members in our mailing list, and much more...

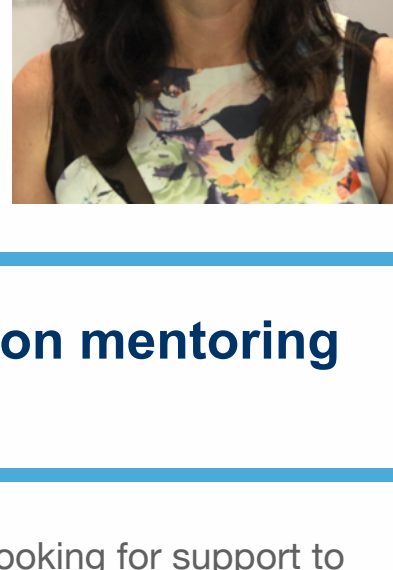
Happy reading!

The SSA Biostatistics and Bioinformatics section committee

Changes in the Biostatistics and Bioinformatics section

In August 2019, Karen Lamb stood down as co-chair of the biostatistics and bioinformatics section to instead focus on developing a mentoring pilot scheme. Details of this exciting new scheme are provided below.

Jaimi Greenslade now joins Sabine Braat as section co-chair. Jaimi is an Advance Queensland fellow and holds a joint appointment with QUT and The Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital as a health services researcher and biostatistician.



SSA Biostatistics & Bioinformatics section mentoring pilot

Are you an early or mid-career biostatistician or bioinformatician looking for support to grow and develop your career? Or, are you a more experienced biostatistician or bioinformatician looking to share your skills and experience with a new generation of statisticians? If either of these sound like you then this program may be for you! The Biostatistics & Bioinformatics Section is piloting a 12-month mentoring program (1 month preparation and pairing, 10 months participating in the program, 1 month reporting period) in 2020 and are looking for 10 mentor-mentee pairs to take part.

Our aim

This program will connect early and mid-career biostatisticians and bioinformaticians to experienced mentors to provide them with career advice and mentoring to help them achieve their professional goals.

Mentees

We are looking to recruit early to mid-career biostatisticians or bioinformaticians to take part in this pilot. To be eligible to participate, you must be within the first ten years of a career in biostatistics or bioinformatics, a member of the SSA, and be willing to commit to participating in the program over a 12-month period. Student members are welcome to apply.

Mentors

We are looking to recruit mentors who have at least ten years' experience working as a biostatistician or bioinformatician. To be eligible to participate, you must be a member of the SSA and be willing to commit to participating in the program over a 12-month period. Prior mentorship experience would be beneficial but is not a requirement for participation.

Program details

The Biostatistics and Bioinformatics Section will match mentors to mentees and contact the mentee to seek approval to introduce them to the proposed mentor. Each mentor will only be assigned one mentee. Mentees are responsible for arranging the initial meeting and establishing ongoing meetings with the mentor. Ideally, mentors and mentees should aim to meet for one hour every 4-6 weeks during the 10-month program but, at a minimum, should meet four times during the pilot. There is no requirement that mentors and mentees live in the same city; meetings do not have to be face-to-face and may be held via phone or video conference as necessary. A member of the Biostatistics and Bioinformatics Section will be in touch throughout the program to learn how things are progressing and to help resolve any issues that arise. There is no expectation that the relationship continue beyond the 12-month pilot. However, we would be delighted if mentor-mentee pairs continue to talk beyond the program! Further details about the pilot will be provided before the program commences.

Interested?

To register your interest in participating in the pilot mentoring program, please complete the following [google form here](#) by 31st October. Successful applicants will be notified by the end of the year, with the program commencing in February 2020. Mentoring will run from February to November.

Please contact [Karen Lamb](#) if you have any questions about this program.

Call to Bioinformaticians

The Biostatistics Section of the Statistical Society of Australia (SSA) was recently rebranded to the Biostatistics and Bioinformatics Section. As a result, our section is looking for enthusiastic bioinformaticians who are interested in becoming active members of the committee steering the Biostatistics and Bioinformatics Section. This member will help develop ideas to engage with interested bioinformaticians around the country. As a committee member, you will have the opportunity to contribute to shaping the direction of this section. You also will help in organising events such as at the upcoming [ANZSC 2020](#). Membership involves participating in one teleconference approximately every 6 weeks and a few hours between meetings to assist in tasks including organising events, social media engagement and developing quarterly newsletters. The deadline for applications is 1 November 2019. Please click [here](#) for more information.

B&B End of Year Networking events

Our biostatistics and bioinformatics section is teaming up with a number of SSA state branches to host social events towards the end of 2019. These will provide a great opportunity to meet other statisticians in your area or to catch up with people for an end of year drink. Please spread the word to colleagues who may be interested in attending. We hope to see many of you and your colleagues at these events!



New South Wales - On the 21st October 2019, the NSW branch will be providing light refreshments and drinks at room 340, New Law Building, University of Sydney. This social event starts at 5:30pm and attendees are also welcome to join the branch meeting at 6:30pm where Elizabeth Stewart from John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health will be presenting. [Registration](#) is required for this event.

Queensland - The SSA Queensland Branch will be holding a social event in Brisbane during early December. Light refreshments and drinks will be provided. Stay tuned to the Queensland branch [facebook](#) page, the biostatistics and bioinformatics [facebook](#) page, or the SSA [events](#) page for further details about this event.

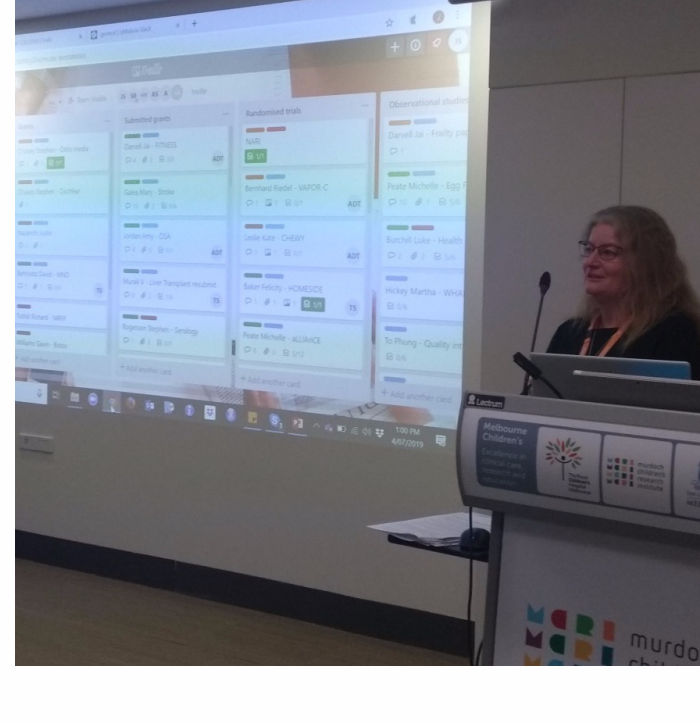
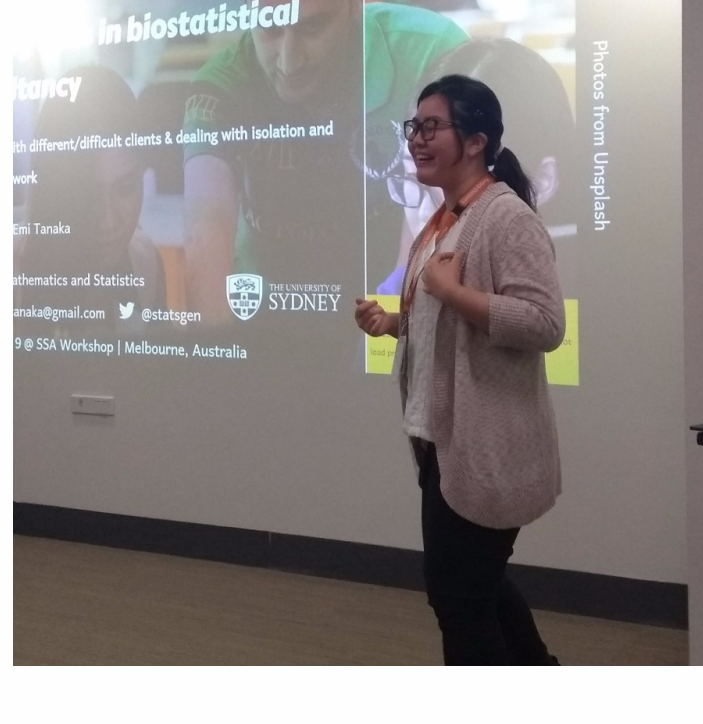
South Australia - On Friday December 6, the Cornish lecture will take place in Adelaide, organised by the SSA South Australian Branch. Afterwards, attendees and others interested can attend the networking event over a drink. Stay tuned to the biostatistics and bioinformatics [facebook](#) page, or the SSA [events](#) page for further details about this event.

Statistical Consultancy workshop

On the 4th July, the SSA Biostatistics & Bioinformatics Section co-hosted their 'Getting started in biostatistical consultancy' workshop with the Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics Unit at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI).

This event sold out quickly, perhaps not surprising given the fantastic speakers we managed to attract to speak at this event! Associate Professor Susan Donath, Senior Biostatistician and Deputy Director of the Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics Unit at MCRI, kicked off the morning session with an overview of statistical consultancy from start to finish. Susan stressed the importance of being curious and asking many, many questions with "what is your research question?" being the most critical and often taking the longest to answer! Next up was Dr Emily Karahalios, Senior Research Fellow at both Monash and Melbourne University, who discussed how to plan, organise and monitor projects. Emily provided some fantastic resources for helping project planning and monitoring, noting the need to take time to plan your work and to be realistic with yourself (and others) about what can be achieved within a given timeframe. After lunch, Professor Julie Simpson, Head of the Biostatistics Unit at Melbourne School of Population and Global Health and leader of the Biostatistics node of the Melbourne Clinical and Translational Science platform at Melbourne University, delivered a presentation on how to reach clients. As well as discussing finance models and modes of operation, Julie talked about how to build a team and work effectively with one another. She led a lively interactive session in which participants talked about the characteristics they bring to a team and what their strengths are. Our final presenter of the day was Dr Emi Tanaka from the University of Sydney who discussed interacting with different (and difficult) clients. Emi discussed the emotional impact that difficult clients can have on us and our work as biostatistical consultants and how we can overcome that. The workshop ended with a lively panel discussion with many questions from our very engaged audience. We thought the workshop was a great success and hope the participants enjoyed it too!

Feedback from the workshop was generously provided by 36 attendees. The majority of the feedback was positive. Attendees noted that the workshop was cost-effective and that the presenters all were excellent. Some felt that it could have been even longer to allow more specific information to be included. There was some excellent feedback given to the section about potential avenues for improvement in future workshops. These included the incorporation of an additional session on running private consultancies. In particular, attendees wanted information on how to attract clients, how to negotiate price, and how to find consulting jobs. This feedback will be incorporated into our next statistical consultancy workshop, to be conducted in Queensland in 2020. We would happily take additional suggestions for workshop content, so if you have information you would like to see in this future workshop, please contact [Jaimi Greenslade](#).



Dr Emi Tanaka (left) discussing interacting with different (and difficult) clients. Professor Julie Simpson (right) describing the use of trello for managing projects within a team.



The SSA is in the process of reviving their webinar series to ensure we reach our members across the country. In the second half of this year we will be holding a webinar on bioinformatics. This webinar will feature Associate Professor Agus Salim from La Trobe University (Melbourne)

Keep an eye out in future newsletters for additional information on the webinars. If you have any suggestions of biostatistics or bioinformatics topics you would like our section to cover in a seminar or workshop, please contact us. Additionally, do let us know if you are aware of any visiting international biostatisticians or bioinformaticians who are coming to Australia who may be interested in presenting at an SSA event. All events organised by the SSA can be found on the [SSA events calendar](#).

Other upcoming events

There are a range of biostatistics and bioinformatics events taking place in 2019 and 2020. These include:

[Australasian Epidemiological Association Annual Scientific Meeting](#)
Brisbane, Australia, 23rd-25th October 2019

[Network meta-analysis and population adjustment for decision making](#)
Sydney, Australia, 4th-5th November 2019

[New Zealand Statistical Association Conference](#)
Dunedin, New Zealand, 26th-28th November 2019

[International Biometric Society- Australasian Region](#)
Adelaide, Australia, 11th-8th December 2019

[7th International Statistical Ecology Conference](#)
Sydney, Australia, 22th-26th June 2020

[Australian and New Zealand Statistical Conference](#)
Gold Coast, Australia, 6th-10th July 2020.

If you would like to advertise any upcoming biostatistics or bioinformatics events to our mailing list, please contact one of our co-Chairs, [Sabine Braat](#) or [Jaimi Greenslade](#)

Featured articles

Effect Estimates in Randomized Trials and Observational Studies: Comparing Apples With Apples.

Lodi et al (Epidemiology, 2019) in their paper titled "Effect estimates in randomized trials and observational studies: Comparing Apples with Apples" present a three step procedure that allows a comparison of the estimates from observational studies and randomized trials. The three stages include 1) harmonization of the study, 2) harmonization of data analysis to target a common estimand, and 3) sensitivity analyses to investigate the impact from any remaining discrepancies (e.g unmeasured confounding). This article can be accessed from the following website. It is not open access.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/31063192>



Are you aware of a recently published article that may be of interest to our biostatistics and bioinformatics members? Please do not hesitate to let [Murthy Nittmyr](#) know.

Meet our mailing list



Name: Jennie Louise

Where do you currently work? I work in the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Adelaide, in two roles: one with a research group led by Prof. Jodie Dodd in the Discipline of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, and the other in Adelaide Health Technology Assessment.

What field do you associate with, biostatistics or bioinformatics (or both)? I am definitely a biostatistician but I have been involved with some projects involving bioinformatics and have been trying to gain more skills and knowledge in that area.

What are your background studies in and how did you join this field? I have had a rather strange career path. I originally trained in philosophy (ethics, decision theory and formal logic) and was a lecturer in the philosophy department, but I needed a change in direction. I enrolled in the BCA Masters in Biostatistics to retain and shift to a different career, and then started working as a junior statistician in the Data Management and Analysis Centre at the University of Adelaide.

Why did you want to work in this field? I really enjoy statistics in itself; I love working with data and learning new methods and approaches. I especially like biostatistics because I'm also interested in health, medicine, genetics, etc., and by working as a statistician on a project, I can learn a lot about the particular subject matter. I like working as part of an interdisciplinary team, and I really love that there are always new things to learn.

What is the most exciting concept/idea upcoming in your work or field? It's really hard to answer this one, because there are so many interesting things going on. At the moment I am most interested in work being done on novel clinical trial designs (adaptive designs, cluster-randomised trials), causal inference (especially methods to handle more complex data structures, like multilevel data) and in bioinformatics.

If you didn't pursue biostatistics and/or bioinformatics, what would have been your alternate career? Unfortunately, no one will pay me to play with cats all day, so I would probably be doing something in health policy or health ethics.

Want to be featured in the next member profile?
Please let [Nicole De La Mata](#) know.



Closing comments

We are enthusiastic about our growing mailing list, and commit ourselves to assisting you with your career in biostatistics or/and bioinformatics. We are interested in hearing from our members, especially regarding ideas for future events, presentations, webinars or workshops held by the SSA Biostatistics & Bioinformatics section. We are interested in hearing about our members and how they became involved in biostatistics or bioinformatics. Please contact us via our section co-Chairs, either [Sabine Braat](#) or [Jaimi Greenslade](#) regarding these or any other related queries.

If your colleagues would like to receive this newsletter, they can sign up via [mailchimp](#)

To view previous newsletters please see our [section's webpage](#).

Social media

We encourage all our members to follow our activities on our social media account links below. We actively promote upcoming events, job opportunities and relevant material. Our online community is growing with over 539 followers on Facebook and 239 on twitter. If you have any material you would like us to promote on our social media outlets or share with the fellow members, please let [Karen Lamb](#) know.



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