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Timely Topics Take the Podium at ASA's 2007 Joint Statistical Meetings

[Note to editors: ASA will be pleased to try to set up interviews with any of the presenters; contact rosanne@amstat.org]

ALEXANDRIA, VA (PRWEB) JULY 17, 2007 – Many topics of timely interest will be featured among the more than 2,500 presentations and other sessions at the 2007 Joint Statistical Meetings (JSM) at Salt Lake City's Salt Palace Convention Center July 29 to August 2. JSM is the world's largest annual gathering of statisticians, attended by more than 5,000 people from the government, industry and academic sectors.

"The conference will address issues of national and international concern, such as global warming and medical advances, as well as activities that address political processes, physical and social sciences, and manufacturing processes and quality," said William Smith, ASA executive director. "In our data-driven society, the statistics discipline has a proud heritage of helping make sensible decisions in the face of uncertainty."

The "timely topics" include sessions in the subject areas of law, medicine, national defense, government & politics, weather, search engines, sports and consumer safety. A representative sample of sessions follows; a complete list can be accessed at <http://www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2007/pdfs/TimelyTopics.doc>.

- **What Happened In Florida-13's Election Last Year - What Can We Do To Improve Electoral Integrity?**

Presenter: Arlene Ash, Boston University

The statistical evidence that poor electronic ballot design altered the outcome of the election for U.S. House of Representatives in Florida's 13th Congressional district last year seems compelling. Ash will discuss evidence from this election, reasons for the persistent failure to eliminate errors in U.S. elections (no CQI), the disconnect between statistical knowledge and political/judicial realities, and potential roles for statisticians (and the ASA) in helping to improve electoral processes and outcomes.

- **Is Tiger A Winner, or Is He Just So Much Better Than Everyone?**

Presenter: Scott Berry, Berry Consultants

When commentators and the sporting public talk about Tiger Woods, they inevitably say he has a tremendous will to win and is mentally better than everyone else. Sports are notorious for attaching "reasons" to randomness--there has to be a reason he wins so darn much. The sports world also loves "winners." Is Tiger Woods a winner, or is he so much better than everyone else that he just wins a lot?

- **Alzheimer's Disease Research in Utah: Analysis Methods for Early Detection, Epidemiology and Clinical Trials**

Presenters: Gordon J. Chelune, The University of Utah; Chris Corcoran, Utah State University; Carl F. Pieper, Duke University; Peter Zandi, Johns Hopkins University;

Kenton Zavitz, Myriad Pharmaceuticals; Mark Laughlin, Myriad Pharmaceuticals; Edward Swabb, Myriad Pharmaceuticals. The session is chaired by C. Shane Reese, Brigham Young University

- **Statistics and Search Engines**

Presenter: Daryl Pregibon, Google

Search engines (SEs) are ubiquitous, yet the role that statistics and data mining play in their care and feeding is not well known. The presenter introduces several examples to illustrate the scale and scope of statistical applications used in modern search engines.

- **Media Coverage Regarding Data on Mortality in Iraq**

Presenters: Leslie Roberts, Columbia Mailman School of Public Health; Gilbert Burnham and Shannon Doocy, Johns Hopkins University

Discussion will focus on media coverage (pro and con) that emphasized the controversial nature of a recent national mortality survey in Iraq, in spite of the conventional methods employed, and has continued to focus on lower surveillance estimates based on morgue and hospital records. This is because of the difficulties of communicating sample results, the extremely incomplete nature of vital record-keeping in settings of extreme violence, and successful spinning of the story by parties with nonscientific agendas.

- **Risk and the Early Detection of Disease**

Presenters: Marvin Zelen, Harvard School of Public Health; Sandra Lee, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute

Currently there are many recommendations for individuals to seek special exams to detect chronic diseases even though an individual has no signs or symptoms. In nearly all adult cancers, the disease risk increases with age. This talk will discuss a method for scheduling screening exams according to risk status.

- **Verdict on Verdicts: Statistical Measurement of the Accuracy of Jury Verdicts**

Presenter: Bruce D. Spencer, Northwestern University

Accuracy of jury verdicts is a societal concern, but aside from exceptional cases, little is known about how often juries as a whole get it wrong.

- **Safety First--Managing Patient's Safety and Mitigating Product's Risks**

Presenter: Christy Chuang-Stein, Pfizer

Protecting patients' safety and ensuring that benefit outweighs risk are the guiding principles in selecting treatments for patients and conducting medical experimentation.

The presenter will review the role safety evaluation plays in product assessment and the role such assessment occupies in various Prescription Drug User Fee Acts.

About JSM

JSM is held jointly with the American Statistical Association (ASA), the International Biometric Society (ENAR and WNAR), the Institute of Mathematical Statistics (IMS), and the Statistical Society of Canada. The theme for this year's conference is *Statistics: Harnessing the Power of Information*. A brief history of the JSM can be found at

<http://www.amstat.org/meetings/JSM/2007/pdfs/ABriefHistoryoftheASAAnnualMeetings.doc>

About the American Statistical Association

The American Statistical Association (ASA), a scientific and educational society founded in Boston in 1839, is the second oldest professional society in the United States. For more than 160 years, ASA has been providing its 18,000 members serving in academia, government, and industry and the public with up-to-date, useful information about statistics. The ASA has a proud tradition of service to statisticians, quantitative scientists, and users of statistics across a wealth of academic areas and applications. For additional information about the American Statistical Association, please visit the association's web site at <http://www.amstat.org> or call 703.684.1221.

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