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## **Timely Topics Featured at ASA's 2007 Joint Statistical Meetings**

**ALEXANDRIA, VA, JUNE 6, 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 "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 <https://www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2007/onlineprogram/index.cfm?fuseaction=main>. [Note to editors: ASA will be pleased to try to set up interviews with any of the presenters; contact [mrosanne@amstat.org](mailto:mrosanne@amstat.org)]

- **Verdict on Verdicts: Statistical Measurement of the Accuracy of Jury Verdict**  
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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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  
The session is a discussion of a national mortality survey conducted in Iraq. Media coverage of the survey results emphasized the controversial nature of the study, 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.

- Pro Bono Statistics and Public Policy**  
 Presenter: Yasmin H. Said, George Mason University  
 Efforts to persuade Congress to enact legislation that affects public policy are constantly being made by lobbyists who are paid by special interests; this method often does not serve the public interests in the best possible way. As counterpoint to this mode of operation, pro bono interaction with individual legislators and especially testimony in Congressional hearings can be remarkably effective in presenting a balanced picture.
- 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 is 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 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?
- 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.

## 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/TimelyTopics.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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