

ASA Presents Physical Sciences Writer Natalie Wolchover with 2016 Excellence in Statistical Reporting Award

ALEXANDRIA, VA (July 31, 2016) – Natalie Wolchover, senior writer for *Quanta Magazine*, received the American Statistical Association’s (ASA) 2016 Excellence in Statistical Reporting Award (ESRA) during a ceremony last evening at the Joint Statistical Meetings (JSM 2016) in Chicago.

JSM 2016 is the largest gathering of statisticians and data scientists in the world.

Wolchover was honored for an article titled “At the Far Ends of a New Universal Law” that illuminated the power and elegance of a relatively new statistical law that underpins an astonishing number of seemingly unrelated phenomena—the movement of species in an ecosystem, the growth of bacteria in a medium, even the distribution of shuffled integers.

“Natalie’s work takes readers through an exploration of the Tracy-Widom distribution, showing them how statisticians and mathematicians came to understand this once-mysterious pattern and ground the behavior of complex, interacting systems in the mechanics of phase transitions,” said Morteza Marzjarani, chair of the ASA ESRA Committee. “She dives deep into the statistical nature of our world, one that inspires [the] reader to partake in a grand intellectual journey.”

Throughout her career, Wolchover has written for *LiveScience*, *Popular Science*, *Seed*, *Make* magazine and other publications. She earned a bachelor’s degree in physics from Tufts University, studied graduate-level physics at the University of California, Berkeley and co-authored several academic papers in nonlinear optics.

Established to recognize members of the media for their presentation of the science of statistics and its role in public life, the award is given for a single statistical presentation or sustained worthy contributions to the statistical profession. It is bestowed on an individual based on the following criteria:

- Correctness, clarity, fairness, brevity, and professionalism of communications
- Importance, relevance, and overall effectiveness in affecting the intended audience
- Impact on the growth and national or regional exposure of statistics
- Appreciation for and emphasis of the statistical aspects of a particular issue or event
- Excellent coverage of research on statistics or statistical issues

Past honorees include Julie Rehmeyer and Regina Nuzzo, freelance science and statistics writers; Alan Schwarz, *The New York Times*; Felix Salmon, *Reuters*; Sharon Begley, *Bloomberg News*; and Amanda Cox, *The New York Times*.

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About JSM 2016

Occurring annually since 1974, JSM is a joint effort of the American Statistical Association, International Biometric Society (ENAR and WNAR), Institute of Mathematical Statistics, Statistical Society of Canada, International Chinese Statistical Association, International Indian Statistical Association, Korean International Statistical Society, International Society for Bayesian Analysis, Royal Statistical Society, and International Statistical Institute. JSM activities include oral presentations, panel sessions, poster presentations, professional development courses, an exhibit hall, a career service, society and section business meetings, committee meetings, social activities and networking opportunities.

About the American Statistical Association

The ASA is the world's largest community of statisticians and the oldest continuously operating professional science society in the United States. Its members serve in industry, government and academia in more than 90 countries, advancing research and promoting sound statistical practice to inform public policy and improve human welfare. For additional information, please visit the ASA website at www.amstat.org.

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