

# B-Stat News

The Newsletter  
of the  
*Belgian Statistical Society*  
*Belgische Vereniging voor Statistiek*  
*Soci t  Belge de Statistique*

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Editeurs responsables/Verantwoordelijke uitgevers :  
Olivier Thas, Universiteit Gent  
Coupure Links 653, 9000 Gent  
Sophie Vanbelle, Service de Biostatistique, Universit  de Li ge  
CHU Sart Tilman, 4000 Li ge

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### **Website of the Society**

[www.sbs-bvs.be](http://www.sbs-bvs.be)

### **Webmaster**

Laurence Seidel : [laurence.seidel@ulg.ac.be](mailto:laurence.seidel@ulg.ac.be)

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## **Long life to the Belgian Statistical Society**

Dear SBS-BVS members,

At the end of 2007 and of my presidency, I want to wish you a Happy and Prosperous New Year 2008. It has been an honour and great privilege to serve you as president. I thank you for your confidence and support. The Belgian Statistical Society has continued to grow in the past years and its name is now well established and widely recognized.

In 2007, we particularly enjoyed the BSS annual meeting which took place for the first time in a modern venue, The Crowne Plaza Hotel, in Antwerp. The meeting attracted many participants and was a real success. I have much respect for all the efforts and endeavours made by the StatUa under the leadership of Peter Goos. The experience will be repeated in 2008 at the Novotel in Wépion (Namur) and I wish good luck to the FUNDP statistical team led by Marcel Remon. In 2007, our members have organized many seminars, workshops and conferences not only locally or nationally but also on the international scene. More scientific events will take place in 2008. The year 2007 saw the opening of initial masters in statistics and biostatistics in most Belgian universities as a consequence of the Bachelor/Master Bologna decree. It is likely that the offer will exceed the demand in the future but for time being we can only wish much success to these new master programmes. There is indeed a demand for more statisticians in scientific research, in industry and in society. Never before have we been overloaded by such huge amounts of data and information that ought to be properly analysed and turned into understandable knowledge.

At the end of my presidency, I confess that my greatest satisfaction is to see some of our younger statisticians becoming more and more involved in the society's activities and management. This is really rewarding as we, the older generation, start stepping down from office. I am confident that, with the new board, the society is in good hands.

It is difficult to acknowledge all persons who helped me during the 3-year presidency. Nonetheless, I particularly want to express my sincere thanks to Gentiane Haesbroeck for her considerable contribution as secretary, Marc Aerts and Hilde Wijnen at UHasselt who took care of the treasury office, Sophie Vanbelle and Olivier Thas, the editors of the B-Stat News, Laurence Seidel, our webmaster, and Paul Janssen, the vice-president, who will take over the presidency in 2008 according to our statutes.

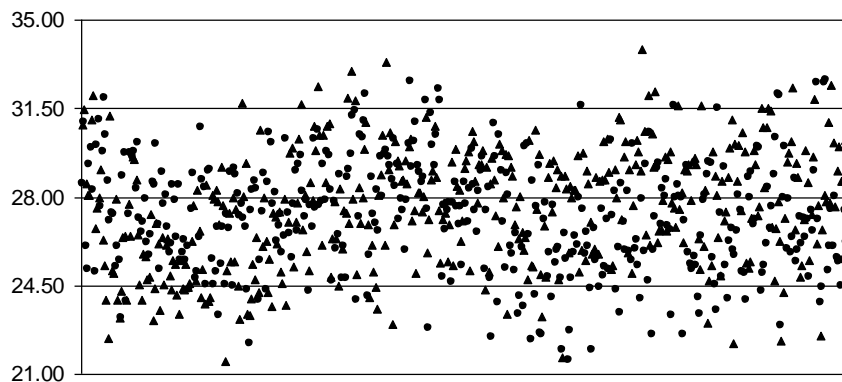
Long life to the Belgian Statistical Society!

Adelin Albert  
President 2005-2007

## ERRORS AND MISTAKES

In this short contribution, I shall describe a challenge I frequently observe with my consulting students. More specifically, I shall tell you how my students tend to communicate with their clients and how this can damage their credibility. I believe that such behavior generalizes to a much larger population. In order to help protect the credibility of our profession, I would like to encourage you to raise awareness about proper communication among your students and peers and to be careful yourself about how you communicate with the outside world.

Some time ago, a group of my consulting students worked for a manufacturer of surgical drapes (the sheets which cover you during an operation). The client wanted to analyze data related to the amount of glue dispensed onto the sheets before fixing pieces of rubber on them. The specifications required that the amount of glue should be between 21 and 35 g/m<sup>2</sup>. The client sent us data covering observations over more than one year.



After having received a methodological reminder on statistical methods for quality control, the students analyzed the data. They found some deviations from stationarity, a few observations which were further away from the process average than the majority, a hint that the left side received a bit more glue than the right, and that one product type had a lower average than the others. Nevertheless, all observations were within the specifications.

Then came the time for the project presentations. How did the students express what they saw? They said that the process was 'out-of-control', 'not-capable', and that there were 'large errors'. During the presentation, the client looked at me and frowned. Fortunately, I knew him well and so I looked back

at him and smiled knowingly. And so he smiled too. After the presentations, I was able to explain to the students and the client what had gone wrong and I hope that they all understood. However, many of our students never take a consulting course and when they face their first clients, they will say things which will make them appear as overzealous fools or which are insulting to their clients.

Where does this come from? It comes from careless use of statistical jargon.

The students called the process out-of-control and meant that a statistical control chart drawn from the data showed indications of what we call 'assignable causes'. These are data patterns for which, if we investigate the process knowledge, we will probably find an explanation. Encouraging our clients to search for causes when such patterns are present help them in better understanding and running their processes.

Yet, to the process operator or owner, 'out-of-control' means 'gone out of hand' which is something much more serious. A few shifts in a process are quite normal. Sometimes a component has to be replaced or the system has to be restarted after the holidays. Such jumps create data patterns which point to assignable causes but they do not imply that the process has 'gone out of hand'.

Instead of calling the process 'out-of-control' the students should have said "we found some shifts and some unusual observations in the data, are these known to you? If yes, could you tell us the reasons for them? If no, are the sizes of these jumps big enough to raise concern?"

The students also called the process 'not capable'. They did this because its process capability index was below one. Such an index compares process location and spread with process target and specifications. It is larger than one when the interval formed by process mean plus or minus three times the process standard deviation is inside the specification limits. Capability indices above one or even two are common objectives in manufacturing. However, a process whose data correspond to a capability index below 1 is not necessarily 'not capable'. In the example, none of the more than 800 observations was outside the specifications. It was obvious that, although the process had moved over time and showed some heterogeneity (which messed up the standard deviation and hence the capability index), it was perfectly capable of remaining between the specifications.

Finally, the students spoke about 'large errors' and since the presentations were in French, they used the word 'erreur'. In French, 'erreur' means 'error'

and ‘mistake’. So, the students had told the client that there were ‘large mistakes’.

With a few poorly chosen words, the students had needlessly insulted the client and his process. Fortunately, a senior statistician was present to smooth the waves, otherwise the credibility of the young statisticians and of our profession might have suffered.

Many of our words have different or less precise meaning in the language of the outside world. Error, statistical control, capability, statistical significance and confidence levels are among them. We cannot always avoid using them, but we should make sure that they are understood the way we intend it. Let us try to avoid turning errors into mistakes.

Christian Ritter,  
Ritter and Danielson Consulting and Université Catholique de Louvain

## **15TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE BELGIAN STATISTICAL SOCIETY**

**Crowne Plaza Hotel-Antwerp, 18-20 October 2007**

The BVS-SBS 2007 annual meeting was organised by StatUa, the forum for statistics and applied statistics at the Universiteit Antwerpen and its association, AUHA. The conference took place at the Crowne Plaza hotel in Antwerp. The scientific part of the conference was jointly organised by the Belgian Branch of the European Network for Business and Industrial Statistics (bENBIS), the Three Country Corner local group of the Royal Statistical Society (RSS-3CC), the Quetelet Society, the Biostatistics section of the SBS-BVS and StatUa. Each of these communities invited one keynote lecturer. The conference consisted of the Young Statistician Day (October 18) and two actual conference days (October 19 and 20).

In total, the conference had 134 registrants, 57 of which were Ph.D. students. Most of the Ph.D. students also attended the Young Statistician Day. Ten of them gave an oral presentation on this occasion. Their talks were preceded by an exposition by Frank Van Splunder (Universiteit Antwerpen) about giving effective presentations. Thirty more oral presentations were given at the actual conference, as well as ten poster presentations. The oral presentations had been arranged in two parallel sessions. Roughly speaking, half of the sessions were related to biostatistics. The rest of the talks could not be categorized easily. Some of the talks were methodological but others were applied talks with applications in marketing, industry and the social sciences.

After a few introductory words by the rector of the Universiteit Antwerpen, Francis Van Loon, the first plenary session of the actual conference was opened by the president of the SBS-BVS, Adelin Albert. In the first plenary session, Shirley Coleman (University of Newcastle) gave a keynote lecture about the merits of the total quality management program Six Sigma and about its links with statistics. The purpose of her talk was to explain that basic statistical techniques are now widespread in many enterprises due to intensive total quality management training programs. Shirley Coleman was the keynote lecturer invited by bENBIS.

Just after lunchtime of the first actual conference day, Carlotta Sacerdote (Università di Torino) gave the second keynote lecture of the conference. She

had been invited by the Biostatistics section of the SBS-BVS and discussed the topic of Mendelian randomization. Advantages and disadvantages of the method were highlighted using different examples of classical observational epidemiological studies and Mendelian randomization approach studies.

The first day conference day was concluded by another keynote lecture organized by StatUa. The speaker was Stefaan Walgrave (Universiteit Antwerpen) who explained how representative samples could be taken during manifestations. Stefaan Walgrave's animated contribution was followed by a reception during which each of the Ph.D. students received a statistics handbook from sponsor Pearson Education, Geert Molenberghs (Universiteit Hasselt) won a Springer book in a lottery and Gaelle Boulet (Universiteit Antwerpen) received the prize for the best presentation at the Young Statistician Day. During the reception, there were two poster walks. During these walks, the poster presenters explained in a couple of minutes what their poster was about. Each of the short poster presentations was then followed by a discussion with the poster walk participants. The poster walks were a big success and generated much more interest in the posters than the classical poster exhibitions. The new formula awarded the poster presenters the attention they deserved. After all this, the conference dinner was more than welcome.

The last day of the conference started with a keynote lecture by Léopold Simar (Université Catholique de Louvain), who had been invited by RSS-3CC. His lecture was about non-parametric frontier models, with a focus on FDH/DEA envelopment estimators. The conference was concluded with a keynote lecture given by Rosemary Bailey (Queen Mary University of London). She had been invited by the Quetelet Society and she gave an entertaining talk about the design of dose-escalation trials. She presented new experimental designs for these studies that outperform the most often used ones from the literature.

After this final keynote lecture, the 15<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Belgian Statistical Society was officially closed, and the 16<sup>th</sup> meeting, to be organized by the Facultés Universitaires Notre-Dame de la Paix Namur, was announced. The 16<sup>th</sup> meeting will take place in Wépion on October 16-17, 2008. The meeting will be preceded by a Young Statistician Day in the same location on Wednesday 15 October. More details about this event can be retrieved at <http://cud.fundp.ac.be/BSS2008/>

After the official closing of the conference, 34 enthusiastic statisticians attended the short course on the analysis of longitudinal data, subject to missingness. During the entire afternoon, the lecturers Geert Molenberghs

(Universiteit Hasselt) and Geert Verbeke (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven) provided the audience with a great introduction to the basics and the not-so-basics of that subject.

The entire event ended up being a very successful meeting in a cosy, friendly and relaxing atmosphere. Keynote lecturer Rosemary Bailey was very pleased with the meeting and said that the meeting of the Belgian Statistical Society was very stimulating and substantially livelier than the meetings of the Royal Statistical Society.

Evidently, the success of the meeting is the result of very hard work by many people, the most important of whom are Sabine Verboven, Ann De Schepper, Anja Struyf, Jeannine Luyten and Gert Verpooten. We owe them a big thank you. The indispensable financial support of the Belgian Statistical Society, FWO-Vlaanderen and the sponsors Fresenius Medical Care, Genzyme, Janssen Pharmaceutica, Merck Research Laboratories, Roche, SAS, Shell and SPSS should also be acknowledged.

Peter Goos  
Universiteit Antwerpen

## GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SBS-BVS

Hasselt, 21 February 2008

The SBS-BVS annual General Assembly will take place at the University of Hasselt (Building D, Room H1), on Thursday 21 February 2008 at 17:00 hours. The election of eight Board members is one of the points on the agenda.

The General Assembly will be preceded by two scientific talks according to the following program:

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| 15:00 – 15:45 | <i>Outlier detection for skewed data</i><br><b>Prof. dr. Mia HUBERT</b><br>Department of Mathematics – LStat, KULeuven                                  |
| 15:45 – 16:30 | <i>Bayesian density estimation from grouped continuous data</i><br><b>Prof. dr. Philippe LAMBERT</b><br>Institut des sciences humaines et sociales, ULg |
| 16:30 – 17:00 | Coffee break  |

You are all cordially invited.

### Abstracts:

*Outlier detection for skewed data*  
Prof. dr. Mia HUBERT, Department of Mathematics – LStat, KULeuven

Most outlier detection rules for multivariate data are based on the assumption of elliptical symmetry of the underlying distribution. We propose an outlier detection method which does not need the assumption of symmetry and does not rely on visual inspection. Our method is a generalization of the Stahel-Donoho outlyingness. To allow skewness in the data, we adjust this measure of outlyingness by using a robust measure of skewness. We also construct an extension of the boxplot for bivariate data, in the spirit of the bagplot which is based on the concept of half space depth. Next, we show how this approach can be used to construct a robust PCA method for skewed data.

*Bayesian density estimation from grouped continuous data*

Prof. dr. Philippe LAMBERT, Institut des sciences humaines et sociales, ULg

Grouped data occur frequently in practice, either because of limited resolution of instruments, or because data have been summarized in relatively wide bins. We show how the composite link model can be combined with roughness penalties or equivalent priors to deliver an estimate of the underlying density and associated quantities. Simulation results and applications will be proposed.

# 8<sup>TH</sup> GERMAN OPEN CONFERENCE ON PROBABILITY AND STATISTICS

**RWTH Aachen University, Germany, 4-7 March 2008**

Online registration is available now via the conference website <http://gocps2008.rwth-aachen.de>. A preliminary schedule can be downloaded as well.

Continuing the series of Conferences in Marburg 1993, Freiberg 1996, München 1998, Hamburg 2000, Magdeburg 2002, Karlsruhe 2004, and Frankfurt 2006, which have become the major events in probability and statistics in Germany, the DMV-Fachgruppe Stochastik jointly with the RWTH Aachen University organizes the 8th German Open Conference on Probability and Statistics ("Aachener Stochastik-Tage 2008").

In the tradition of the previous conferences, it provides an international forum for presentation and discussion of new results in the area of probability and statistics. Participants from universities, business, administration, and industry are welcome.

**Sections:** Stochastic Analysis; Limit Theorems and Large Deviations; Stochastic Geometry, Spatial Statistics, and Image Analysis; Random Discrete Structures and Analysis of Algorithms; Stochastic Processes: Theory and Applications; Time Series and Statistics of Stochastic Processes; Curve Estimation; Asymptotic Statistics; Stochastic Optimization and Operations Research; Data Analysis and Multivariate Statistics; Stochastic Models in Finance and Insurance; Statistical Methods in Finance and Insurance; Econometrics and Risk Analysis; Stochastic Models in the Natural Sciences; Statistics in Medicine and Biosciences; Stochastic Methods in Engineering

**Plenary speakers** will be **Narayanaswamy Balakrishnan** (McMaster University, Canada), **Steven N. Evans** (University of California at Berkeley, USA), **Frank den Hollander** (Universiteit Leiden, The Netherlands), **Eva Riccomagno** (Università degli Studi di Genova, Italy), **Aad van der Vaart** (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands).

**Invited section speakers** will be **Dragan Banjevic** (University of Toronto, Canada), **Andrew Barbour** (Universität Zürich, Switzerland), **Rama Cont**

(Columbia University, USA), **Kjell Doksum** (University of Wisconsin, USA), **Paul Doukhan** (Université Paris 1 SAMOS and LS-CREST, France), **Franco Flandoli** (Università di Pisa, Italy), **Jean Jacod** (Université Pierre and Marie Curie Paris, France), **Geurt Jongbloed** (Delft University of Technology, The Netherlands), **Geert Molenberghs** (Hasselt University, Belgium), **Thomas Mountford** (Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, Switzerland), **Bernt Øksendal** (University of Oslo, Norway), **Leonid Pastur** (B.Verkin Institute ILTPE, Ukraine), **Anton Schick** (Binghamton University, USA), **Wim Schoutens** (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium), **Jonathan Taylor** (Stanford University, USA), **Johan Wästlund** (Linköping University, Sweden).

***Conference fees:***

Payment till 31.01.2008:  
Regular : 70 Euro  
Members of Fachgruppe Stochastik: 60 Euro  
Undergraduate/Master Students: 20 Euro

Payment after 31.01.2008:  
Late registration: 100 Euro  
Undergraduate/Master Students: 50 Euro

For more detailed information and online registration please visit the conference website <http://gocps2008.rwth-aachen.de>.

***Contact information:***

E-mail: [gocps2008@stochastik.rwth-aachen.de](mailto:gocps2008@stochastik.rwth-aachen.de)

Chair of programme committee: Christine Müller, Department of Mathematics, University of Kassel, D-34132 Kassel, Germany

Chair of local organizing committee: Udo Kamps, Institute of Statistics, RWTH Aachen University, D-52056 Aachen, Germany

**YEP-V WORKSHOP  
STATISTICAL MACHANICS ON RANDOM  
STRUCTURES**

**EURANDOM, Eindhoven, 10-14 March 2008**

This workshop is the fifth in a successful series of YEP meetings at EURANDOM in the years 2004-2007. This year, the main focus of the workshop will be the investigation of the large scale behaviour of systems whose "interaction network" is modelled by random graphs.

The goal of the workshop would be to bring together the scholars whose interest lies in the intersection of disordered statistical mechanics and random graphs with a clear emphasis on applications.

The workshop offers two mini-courses:

- **Francesco Guerra** (University Roma 1, La Sapienza): "*Probabilistic aspect of spin glass theory*"
- **Hidetoshi Nishimori** (Tokyo Institute of Technology): "*Combinatorial optimization problems and quantum annealing*".

There will also be contribute talks by the participants, as well as talks by leading experts in the field: **A. Bovier** (Weierstrass Institute, Berlin), **R. v.d.Hofstad** (Eindhoven & EURANDOM), **J. Kurchan** (ESPCI , Paris, France), **E. Marinari** (University Roma 1, La Sapienza), **R. Zecchina** (Politecnico Torino).

For more detailed information and registration:

<http://www.eurandom.tue.nl/workshops/2008/YEPV/YepVmain.htm>

# **29<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR CLINICAL BIostatISTICS**

**Copenhagen, Denmark, 17 – 21 August 2008**

The Society was founded in 1978 to stimulate research into the principles and methodology used in the design and analysis of clinical research and to increase the relevance of statistical theory to the real world of clinical medicine.

**The 29th Annual Conference in Copenhagen** will provide a forum for the international exchange of theory, methods and applications of biostatistics in medical research and practice among clinicians, statisticians and members of other disciplines, such as epidemiologists, clinical chemists and clinical pharmacologists, working or interested in the field of clinical biostatistics.

All participants are invited to submit abstracts for contributed papers. Contributed papers are welcome in any area of biostatistics, epidemiology and related topics. Deadline is 1 March 2008.

Invited sessions will be held during the week from Monday 18th August to Wednesday 20th August.

- **Opening plenary session: State-of-the-art lectures**
- **Causal models and evidence from non-randomised studies**
- **Recent developments in genetics**
- **How to analyse an adaptive trial: Tests, estimates and confidence intervals**
- **Biomarkers, qualification and application**
- **Special session: Working places in biostatistics**

For more detailed information and registration: <http://www.iscb2008.info/>

# 16TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE BELGIAN STATISTICAL SOCIETY

**Wépion-Namur, (15) 16-17 October 2008**



The 16th annual meeting of the Belgian Statistical Society will be held on Thursday 16 and Friday 17 October 2008 in the Novotel in Wépion (Namur). The meeting will be preceded by a Young Statistician Day in the same location on Wednesday 15 October.

The Statistical Unit of the Department of Mathematics of Namur University will take care of the practical organisation of this 16th edition of the annual meeting, which will feature sessions organized by the Biostatistical Section of the Belgian Statistical Society, the Three Country Corner local group of the Royal Statistical Society, the Quetelet Society and the Belgian branch of the European Network for Business and Industrial Statistics in addition to the contributed sessions.

More details will soon be posted at <http://www.fundp.ac.be/bss2008/> !

## FORTHCOMING STATISTICAL EVENTS

**January 21-22, 2008** – Louvain-la-Neuve (UCL), short course on "*Statistical Inference for Curve Estimation and Classification*",  
Lutz Dümbgen (<http://www.imsv.unibe.ch/~duembgen/>), University of Bern  
More information:

**January 22-25, 2008** – 10th European Symposium on Statistical Methods for the Food Industry  
More information: <http://www.stat.ucl.ac.be/Agrostat2008/>

**January 30, 2008** – UCL (CORE) Joint with LSM Finance Seminar  
"*The impact of the introduction of an ETF on the cost of trading the underlying index: the case of the Lyxor-ETF-CAC40*"  
Carole GRESSE, Université Paris Dauphine  
More information: <http://www.uclouvain.be/en-43677.html>

**February 4-6, 2008** – FUSAGx, "*Introduction à la modélisation bayésienne*",  
Pr C. Abraham, SupAgro, Montpellier (France)  
More information: ([registration](#))

**February 7-8, 2008** – Brussels, "*Actuarial and Financial Mathematics Conference: Interplay between Finance and Insurance*"  
More information: <http://www.afmathconf.ugent.be/>

**March 4-7, 2008** – Aachen, Germany "*8th German Open Conference on Probability and Statistics*"  
More information: <http://gocps2008.rwth-aachen.de>

**March 5, 2008** – UCL (CORE) "*Understanding the Impact of Promotional Messages in Internet English Auctions: A Dynamic and Simultaneous Model of New Bidder's Entry, Sequence of Bids, and Auctioneer's Strategy*"  
Caroline DUCARROZ, FUCAM  
More information: <http://www.uclouvain.be/en-43677.html>

**March 10-14, 2008** – EURANDOM, Eindhoven “*YEP-V workshop*”  
More information:  
<http://www.eurandom.tue.nl/workshops/2008/YEPV/YepVmain.htm>

**April 11, 2008** – Brussels (VUB) “*9th Belgian Chemometrics Symposium*”  
More information: <http://chemometrie.kvcv.be/>

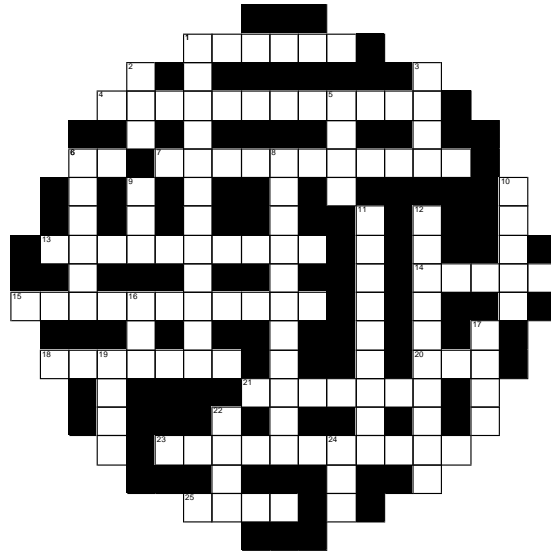
**May 19, 2008** – ULB, Annual Doctoral Workshop of the Graduate School in Statistics and Actuarial Sciences of the French Speaking Community of Belgium

**May 20-21, 2008** – UCL, short course on “*Extreme value theory and heavy tailed distributions*”  
Sydney Resnik (Cornell)

**August 17-21, 2008** – Copenhagen, Denmark, “*29<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the International Society for Clinical Biostatistics*”  
More information: <http://www.iscb2008.info/>

**October (15) 16-17, 2008** – Wépion, Namur, “*16<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Belgian Statistical Society*”  
More information: <http://www.fundp.ac.be/bss2008/>

statistical puzzle



Across

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. just as important as the statistical analysis | 23. measured by Pearson                                  |
| 4. when the type I error rate is too small       | 25. to discriminate between the null and the alternative |
| 6. standard deviation                            |  |
| 7. before statistics                             |  |
| 13. a covariate that we like to avoid            |  |
| 14. random and fixed                             |  |
| 15. what scientists want us to prove             |  |
| 18. rank in the presence of ties                 |  |
| 20. Pittman's efficiency                         |  |
| 21. his space is loved by functions              |  |

Down

1. can be described by a density function
2. proportional hazard
3. class of robust tests
5. a dog's end
6. a way of convergence
8. not the null
9. estimator of the cdf
10. A reverend
11. smallest variance
12. used for validation of theory
16. difference between two quartiles
17. average
19. sample
22. nonparametric regression and classification method
24. model selection criterion

## 2008 MEMBER LIST

**AERTS Marc (Pr)** Universiteit Hasselt Centrum voor Statistiek Campus Diepenbeek Agoralaan, Gebouw D B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel: 011-26.82.47 - Fax: 011-26.82.99 - Email: marc.aerts@uhasselt.be

**ALBERT Adelin (Pr)** Université de Liège Service de Biostatistique CHU Sart Tilman (B35) B-4000 LIEGE (BELGIUM); Tel: 04-366.25.91 - 04-366.25.90 - Fax: 04-366.25.96 - Email: aalbert@ulg.ac.be

**ALONSO ABAD Ariel (Dr)** Universiteit Hasselt Centrum voor Statistiek Campus Diepenbeek Agoralaan, Gebouw D B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel: 011-26.82.83 - Fax: 011-26.26.99 - Email: Ariel.Alonso@uhasselt.be

**AMPE Bart (Mr)** Ghent University Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Salisburylaan, 133 B-9820 MERELBEKE (BELGIUM); Tel: 09/264.73.34 - Fax: 09/264.74.99 - Email: Bart.Ampe@ugent.be

**ANDRIES Ellen (Mrs)** Plantenstraat, 16 B-3500 HASSELT (BELGIUM); Tel: 0496/23.08.46 - Fax: - Email:

**ARIAS ORTIZ Elena (Mrs)** Université Libre de Bruxelles Avenue Roosevelt, 50 B-1050 BRUSSELS (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/650.38.61 - Fax: - Email: earias@ulb.ac.be

**AUGUSTYNS Ilse (Dr)** Janssen Pharmaceutica Turnhoutseweg 30 B-2340 BEERSE (BELGIUM); Tel: 014/60.63.38 - Fax: - Email: iaugustij@prdbe.jnj.com

**BAELE Guy (Mr)** Universiteit Gent Department of Applied Maths and Computer Sc. Krijgslaan, 281 - S9 B-9000 GENT (BELGIUM); Tel: 09/264.49.05 - Fax: 09/264.49.95 - Email: guy.baele@ugent.be

**BALOGH Agnes (Mrs)** Bristol Myers Squibb Co. Parc de l'Alliance Avenue de Finlande, 8 B-1420 BRAINE L'ALLEUD (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/352.77.68 - Fax: 02/352.78.00 - Email: agnes.balogh@bms.com

**BANCKEN Fabrice (Dr)** Bristol-Myers-Squibb Parc de l'Alliance Avenue de Finlande, 8 B-1420 BRAINE-L'ALLEUD (BELGIUM); Tel: 32-2-352.76.38 - Fax: 32-2-351.26.79 - Email: fabrice.bancken@bms.com

**BASHIR Saghir (Dr)** Waterpoelstraat, 11 B-1652 ALSEMBERG (BELGIUM); Tel: 0485 616859 - Fax: - Email: info@sbtcbiz

**BAUDELET Christine (Dr)** Bristol-Myers Squibb Parc de l'Alliance Avenue de Finlande, 8 (04E-04F) B-1420 BRAINE L'ALLEUD (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/352.78.23 - Fax: - - Email: Christine.Baudelet@bms.com

**BECK Benoît (Dr)** Drève Emmanuelle, 28A B-1470 BOUSVAL (BELGIUM); Tel: 010/61.81.98 - Fax: - Email:

**BEGUIN Claire (Dr)** Avenue Pierre Damien, 9 (boîte 3) B-1150 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: - Fax: - Email:

**BEIRLANT Jan (Pr.)** Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Departement Wiskunde Celestijnenlaan, 200B B-3001 HEVERLEE (BELGIUM); Tel: 016/32.27.89 - Fax: 016/32.28.31 - Email: jan.beirlant@wis.kuleuven.be

**BELLAMAMMER Leïla (Mrs.)** Statistiques et Information Economique Rue de Louvain, 44 B-1000 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/548.66.63 - Fax: 02/548.66.33 - Email: leila.bellamammer@statbel.mineco.fgov.be

**BENNALA Nezar (Mr)** Université Libre de Bruxelles LMTD CP 124 - Avenue Jeanne, 44 B-1050 BRUXELLES (BELGIQUE); Tel: 02/650.34.08 - Fax: 02/650.34.60 - Email: nbennala@ulb.ac.be

**BEUNCKENS Caroline (Mrs)** Universiteit Hasselt Centrum voor Statistiek Campus Diepenbeek Agoralaan, Gebouw D B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel: 011/26.82.57 - Fax: 011/26.82.99 - Email: caroline.beunckens@uhasselt.be

**BIJNENS Luc (Dr.)** Janssen Pharmaceutica Biometrics and Clinical Informatics Turnhoutseweg 30, Box 6356 B-2340 BEERSE (BELGIUM); Tel: 014/60.63.56 - Fax: 014/60.58.02 - Email: lbijnens@prdbe.jnj.com

**BILLIET Jaak (Mr.)** Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Department Sociology E. Van Evenstraat, 2B B-3001 LEUVEN (BELGIUM); Tel: 016-32.31.57 - Fax: 016.32.33.65 - Email: jaak.Billiet@soc.kuleuven.be

**BODDAERT Michel (Mr.)** UCB Pharma R&D R8 - Biostatistics Chemin du Foriest B-1420 BRAINE L'ALLEUD (BELGIUM); Tel: 02-386.35.71 - Fax: 02-386.30.44 - Email: michel.boddaert@ucb-group.com

**BOEHM Hilmar (Mr)** Isestrasse, 67 D-20149 HAMBURG (GERMANY); Tel: 0049/40 414312322 - Fax: - - Email: -

**BOEL René (Dr.)** Universiteit Gent Vakgroep Elektrische Energietechniek Technologiepark Zwijsnaarde, 9 B-9052 ZWIJNAARDE-GENT (BELGIUM); Tel: 09-264.56.58 - Fax: 09-264.58.40 - Email: rene.Boel@rug.ac.be

**BOGAERTS Jan (Dr)** EORTC Data Center Avenue Mounierlaan, 83/11 B-1200 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/774.10.63 - Fax: 02/771.38.10 - Email: jan.bogaerts@eortc.be

**BOGAERTS Kris (Dr)** Biostatistisch Centrum Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Kapucijnenvoer 35, bus 7001 B-3000 LEUVEN (BELGIUM); Tel: 016-33.68.90 - Fax: 016-33.70.15 - Email: kris.bogaerts@med.kuleuven.be

**BOLLAERTS Kaatje (Mrs)** Universiteit Hasselt Center for Statistics Campus Diepenbeek, Agoralaan 1, Gebouw D B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel: 011/26.82.52 - Fax: 011/26.82.99 - Email: kaatje.bollaerts@uhasselt.be



**BONTEMPI Gianluca (Dr)** Université Libre de Bruxelles Institut d'Informatique Bd du Triomphe, CP 212 B-1050 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/650.55.91 - Fax: - Email: GBonte@ulb.ac.be

**BOULANGER Bruno (Dr)** UCB Pharma SA R&D, Clinical Pharmacometrics Chemin du Foriest B-1420 BRAINE L'ALLEUD (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/386.27.87 - Fax: 02/386.30.44 - Email: bruno.boulanger@UCB-group.com

**BOULTON Muriel (Mrs)** UCB Pharma Sector Chemin du Foriest B-1420 BRAINE-L'ALLEUD (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/386.36.15 - Fax: 02/386.30.44 - Email: Muriel.Boulton@UCB-group.com

**BRAAT Sabine (Mrs)** N. V. Organon ADD: Biometrics Monlenstraat, 100 PO BOX 20 NL 5340 BH OSS (THE NETHERLANDS); Tel: (0)412/66.54.62 - Fax: (0)412/66.25.16 - Email: sabine.braat@organon.com

**BRAEKERS Roel (Pr)** Universiteit Hasselt Centrum voor Statistiek Campus Diepenbeek Agoralaan, Gebouw D B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel: 011/26.82.34 - Fax: 011/26.82.99 - Email: roel.braekers@uhasselt.be

**BRAMATI Maria Caterina (Mrs)** FOD Economie Leuvenseweg 44 B-1000 Brussel (BELGIUM); Tel: - Fax: - Email:

**BROSTAUX Yves (Dr)** Faculté Universitaire des Sc. Agron. de Gembloux Unité de statistique, informatique et math. appl. Avenue de la Faculté, 8 B-5030 GEMBLoux (BELGIUM); Tel: 081/62.24.69 - Fax: 081/62.25.18 - Email: brostaux.y@fsagx.ac.be

**BRUCKERS Liesbeth (Mrs.)** Universiteit Hasselt Centrum voor Statistiek Campus Diepenbeek Agoralaan, Gebouw D B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel: 011-26.82.15 - Fax: 011-26.82.99 - Email: liesbeth.bruckers@uhasselt.be

**BRUSS Thomas (Pr.)** Université Libre de Bruxelles Institut de Statistique Boulevard du Triomphe CP 210 B-1050 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02-650.58.93, 02-650.58.64, 02-650.58.70 - Fax: 02-650.58.99 - Email: tbruss@ulb.ac.be

**BRYS Guy (Mr)** Statistics Belgium (NIS/INS) Leuvenseweg 44 B-1000 BRUSSELS (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/548.66.18 - Fax: - - Email: guy.brys@mineco.fgov.be

**BUGLI Céline (Ir)** Aepodia s.a. Avenue Albert Einstein, 2a B-1348 LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE (BELGIUM); Tel: 010/39.20.16 - Fax: 010/39.20.99 - Email: celine.bugli@aepodia.be

**BURTIN Bernard (Dr.)** UCB Pharma Chemin du Foriest B-1420 BRAINE-L'ALLEUD (BELGIUM); Tel: 02-386.23.05 - Fax: 02-386.24.20 - Email: bernard.burtin@ucb-group.com

**BURZYKOWSKI Tomasz (Dr)** Universiteit Hasselt Centrum voor Statistiek Campus Diepenbeek Agoralaan, Gebouw D B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel: 011/26.81.73 - Fax: 011/26.82.99 - Email: tomasz.burzykowski@uhasselt.be

**BUYSE Marc (Dr)** IDDI Avenue Provinciale, 30 B-1340 OTTIGNIES - Louvain-La-Neuve (BELGIUM); Tel: 010/61.44.44 - Fax: 010/61.88.88 - Email: marc.buyse@iddi.com

**CALLAERT Herman (Pr)** Universiteit Hasselt Centrum voor Statistiek Campus Diepenbeek Agoralaan, Gebouw D B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel: 011-26.82.43 - Fax: 011-26.82.99 - Email: herman.callaert@uhasselt.be

**CALLENS Marc (Dr)** Research Centre of the Flemish Government SVR Boudewijnlaan 30 B-1000 BRUSSELS (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/553.41.96 - Fax: 02/553.58.08 - Email: marc.callens@dar.vlaanderen.be

**CARBONEZ An (Dr)** Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Universitair Centrum voor Statistiek W. de Croylaan, 54 B-3001 HEVERLEE (BELGIUM); Tel: 016/32.22.42 - Fax: 016/32.28.31 - Email: an.carbonez@ucs.kuleuven.be

**CARLETTI Georges (Dr)** B-5030 GEMBLOUX (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/656.94.30 - Fax: - Email: Georges.Carletti@gskbio.com

**CASSART Delphine (Mrs)** Université Libre de Bruxelles Avenue F.D. Roosevelde, 50 B-1050 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/650.34.08 - Fax: 02/650.34.66 - Email: delphine.cassart@ulb.ac.be

**CHEUVART Brigitte (Mrs)** B-5101 ERPENT (BELGIUM); Tel: - Fax: - Email:

**CHRISTMANN Andreas (Pr)** Vrije Universiteit Brussel Faculteit Wetenschappen Pleinlaan, 2 B-1050 BRUSSEL (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/629.34.76 - Fax: 02/629.34.95 - Email: andreas.christmann@vub.ac.be

**CLAESKENS Gerda (Pr)** Katholiek Universiteit Leuven OR & Business Statistics Naamsestraat, 69 B-3000 Leuven (BELGIUM); Tel: 016/32.69.93 - Fax: 016/32.67.32 - Email: gerda.claeskens@econ.kuleuven.be

**CLAUSTRIAUX Jean-Jacques (Pr)** Faculté Universitaire des Sciences Agronomiques Unité de Statistique, Informatique & Math appliq. Av. de la Faculté d'Agronomie, 8 B-5030 GEMBLOUX (BELGIUM); Tel: 081-62.25.12 - 081-62.24.82 - Fax: 081-61.25.18 - Email: claustriaux.jj@fsagx.ac.be

**COMTE Laetitia (Mrs)** Université de Liège Département de Mathématique 12, Grande Traverse B-4000 LIEGE (BELGIUM); Tel: 04/366.94.60 - Fax: - Email: L.Comte@ulg.ac.be

**CONSENTINO Fabrizio (Mr)** Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Naamsestraat, 69 B-3000 LEUVEN (BELGIUM); Tel: 016/32.69.55 - Fax: 016/32.67.32 - Email: fabrizio.Consentino@econ.kuleuven.be

**COPPENOLLE Hans (Dr)** Janssen Pharmaceutica Turnhoutse weg 30, BOX 108 B-2340 BEERSE (BELGIUM); Tel: 014/60.78.89 - Fax: 014/60.58.02 - Email: hcoppeno@prdbe.jnj.com



**CORTINAS ABRAHANTES José (Mr)** Universiteit Hasselt Centrum voor Statistiek  
Campus Diepenbeek Agoralaan, Gebouw D B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel:  
011-26.82.15 - 04799-75.15.66 - Fax: - Email: Jose.Cortinas@uhasselt.be

**COSTANTINI Chiara (Mrs)** UCB-Group Chemin du Foriest B-1420 BRAINE-  
L'ALLEUD (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/386.35.31 - Fax: 02/386.35.58 - Email:  
chiara.costantini@ucb-group.com

**CREEMERS An (Mrs)** University of Hasselt Center for statistics Agoralaan, gebouw  
D B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel: 011/26.82.94 - Fax: 011/26.82.99 - Email:  
an.creemers@uhasselt.be

**CROUX Christophe (Pr)** Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Faculty of Economics and  
Applied Economics Naamsestraat, 69 B-3000 LEUVEN (BELGIUM); Tel: 016/32.69.58  
- Fax: 016/32.67.32 - Email: christophe.croux@econ.kuleuven.be

**DAGNELIE Pierre (Pr)** Chaussée de Charleroi, 177 B-5030 GEMBLOUX  
(BELGIUM); Tel: 081/61.13.04 - Fax: - Email:

**DANIELSON Linda (Ms.)** IDDI Avenue Provinciale, 30 B-1340 OTTIGNIES –  
Louvain-la-Neuve (BELGIUM); Tel: 010/61.44.44 - Fax: 010/61.88.88 - Email:  
linda.danielson@iddi.com

**DANNIAU Anne (Mrs)** avenue des myrtilles, 12 B-1950 KRAAINEM (BELGIUM);  
Tel: 02/725.45.75 - Fax: - Email:

**DARIUS Paul (Pr)** MEBIOS Kasteelpark Arenberg, 30 B-3001 HEVERLEE  
(BELGIUM); Tel: 016-32.14.39 - Fax: 016-32.19;94 - Email:  
Paul.Darius@biw.kuleuven.be

**DAVID Marie-Pierre (Mrs.)** GlaxoSmithKline Biologicals Biologicals Rue de  
l'Institut, 89 B-1330 RIXENSART (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/656.94.37 - Fax: 02/656.81.33  
- Email: Marie-Pierre.David@gskbio.com

**DAWAGNE Jean-Marie (Mr)** Statistics Belgium (NIS/INS) Rue de Louvain, 44 B-  
1000 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/548.66.96 - Fax: 02/548.62.32 - Email:  
jeanmarie.dawagne@statbel.mineco.fgov.be

**DE BACQUER Dirk (Pr)** Vakgroep Maat. Gezondh. De Pintelaan, 185 Blok A B-  
9000 GENT (BELGIUM); Tel: 09-240.36.83 - Fax: 09-240.49.94 - Email:  
dirk.debacquer@rug.ac.be

**DE BLANDER Rembert (Dr)** Katholieke Universiteit Leuven HIVA Parkstraat, 47 B-  
3000 LEUVEN (BELGIUM); Tel: 016/32.30.16 - Fax: 016/32.33.44 - Email:  
Rembert.DeBlander@hiva.kuleuven.be

**DE BRAUWER Annelies (Mrs)** Felix de Hertstraat, 22 B-9300 AALST  
(BELGIUM); Tel: 053/70.91.35 - Fax: - Email: annelies.debrauwer@versatel.be

**DE FRENNE Anne (Mrs.)** Société MATH-X Avenue des Tilleuls, 8 B-1180  
BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02-375.34.10 - Fax: 02-375.88.90 - Email:  
adf@mathx.be

**DE KERCHOVE D' EXAERDE Gérard (Ir)** Chaussée de Jodoigne, 59 B-1390  
GREZ-DOICEAU (BELGIUM); Tel: - Fax: - Email:

**DE LOBEL Lizzy (Mrs)** Universiteit Ghent Krijgslaan, 281 B-9000 GHENT  
(BELGIUM); Tel: 09/264.48.82 - Fax: - - Email: lizzy.delobel@ugent.be

**DE MAERTELAER Viviane (Pr)** Université Libre de Bruxelles IRIBHM Route de  
Lennik, 808, CP 602 B-1070 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/555.41.36 - Fax:  
02/555.46.55 - Email: vdemaert@ulb.ac.be

**DE MEYER Anna Maria (Dr.)** LUDIT Katholieke Universiteit Leuven de Croylaan,  
52a B-3001 HEVERLEE (BELGIUM); Tel: 016/32.22.15 - Fax: 016/32.29.99 - Email:  
anne-marie.demeyer@cc.kuleuven.be

**DE PRIL Veerle (Mrs.)** BMS Parc de l'Alliance Avenue de Finlande, 8 B-1420  
BRAINE-L'ALLEUD (BELGIUM); Tel: 02-352.77.36 - Fax: 02-352.78.00 - Email:  
deprilv@bms.com

**DE RIDDER Filip (Dr.)** Johnson & Johnson Pharmaceutical R & D Turnhoutseweg,  
30 B-2340 BEERSE (BELGIUM); Tel: 014-60.39.98 - Fax: 014-60.61.24 - Email:  
fdridder@prdbe.jnj.com

**DE SCHEPPER Ann (Pr)** University of Antwerp Faculty of Applied Economics  
Prinsstraat, 13 B-2000 ANTWERP (BELGIUM); Tel: 03/220.40.77 - Fax: 03/220.48.17  
- Email: ann.descepper@ua.ac.be

**DEBRUYNE Michiel (Mr)** Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Universitair Centrum voor  
Statistiek Celestijnenlaan, 200B B-3001 HEVERLEE (BELGIUM); Tel: 016/32.22.76 -  
Fax: - Email: michiel.debruyne@wis.kuleuven.be

**DECLERCK Lieven (Dr.)** S-Clinica Boondaalse Steenweg, 6 B-1050 BRUSSELS  
(BELGIUM); Tel: 02/645.05.64 - Fax: 02/645.05.69 - Email: lieven.declerck@s-  
clinica.com

**DECLERCQ Katrien (Mrs)** SAS Institute Belgium-Luxembourg Hertenbergstraat, 6  
B-3080 TERVUREN (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/766.07.00 - Fax: 02/766.07.77 - Email:  
Katrien.Declercq@sbx.sas.com

**DECUYPER Johan (Mr)** National Bank of Belgium Boulevard de Berlaimont, 14 B-  
1000 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/221.45.08 - Fax: 02/221.31.34 - Email:  
johan.decuyper@nbb.be

**DEHON Catherine (Dr)** Université Libre de Bruxelles Avenue F. D. Roosevelt, 50 CP  
114 B-1050 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/650.38.58 - Fax: 02/650.40.12 - Email:  
cdehon@ulb.ac.be



**DEJARDIN David (Mr)** Bristol-Myer-Squibb Parc de l'Alliance Avenue de Finlande, 8 B-1420 BRAINE-L'ALLEUD (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/352.77.56 - Fax: 02/351.26.79 - Email: David.dejardin@bms.com

**DEJONCKHEERE Joachim (Dr)** Oostmeersdreef, 42 B-9800 DEINZE (BELGIUM); Tel: 0479/22.09.36 - Fax: - Email: dejonckheere.joachim@gmail.com

**DELBAEN Freddy (Pr.)** ETH-Zürich Departement für Mathematik CH-8092 ZURICH (SWITZERLAND); Tel: 41-1-632.63.57 - 41-1-632.34.10 - Fax: 41-1-632.10.85 - Email: delbaen@math.ethz.ch

**DELINCE Jacques (Dr.)** Unité AGRIFISH, TP266 Centro Commune di Ricerca 2 via Fermi I-21020 ISPRA (VA) (ITALY); Tel: 39 0 332 78 55 79 - Fax: 39 0 332 78 51 62 - Email: Jacques.Delince@cec.eu.int

**DELOUILLE Véronique (Mrs)** Observatoire Royal de Belgique Avenue Circulaire, 3 B-1180 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/790.39.38 - Fax: 02/373.02.24 - Email: v.delouille@oma.be

**DELTENRE Alain (Mr)** Colgate-palmolive R&D Inc. Avenue du Parc Industriel, 89 B-4040 HERSTAL (BELGIUM); Tel: 04/278.95.61 - Fax: 04/278.95.75 - Email: alain\_deltenre@colpal.com

**DENUIT Michel (Pr)** Institut de Statistique Université Catholique de Louvain Voie du Roman Pays, 20 B-1348 LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE (BELGIUM); Tel: 010/47.28.35 - Fax: 010/47.30.32 - Email: michel.denuit@uclouvain.be

**DEPIEREUX Eric (Pr.)** Facultés Univ. Notre-Dame de la Paix Biologie Moléculaire Rue de Bruxelles, 61 B-5000 NAMUR (BELGIUM); Tel: - Fax: - Email: eric.depiereux@fundp.ac.be

**DERDE Marie-Paule (Mrs.)** DICE Koning Albert Avenue, 160 B-1082 BRUSSEL (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/465.76.50 - Fax: 02/465.76.51 - Email: mp.derde@dice.nu

**DESCHEPPER Ellen (Mrs)** Universiteit Gent Coupure Links, 653 B-9000 GENT (BELGIUM); Tel: 09/264.59.87 - Fax: 09/264.62.20 - Email: ellen.deschepper@ugent.be

**DESMEDT Frans (Mr)** B-9050 GENTBRUGGE (BELGIUM); Tel: - Fax: - Email:

**DESMET Lieven (Mr)** Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Maths Department UCS De Croy Laan, 54 B-3001 HEVERLEE (BELGIUM); Tel: 016/32.27.83 - Fax: 016/32.28.31 - Email: Lieven.Desmet@wis.kuleuven.be

**DESPONTIN Marc (Pr.)** Vrije Universiteit Brussel Centrum Voor Statistiek en Operationeel Onderzoek Pleinlaan, 2 B-1050 BRUSSEL (BELGIUM); Tel: - Fax: - Email: mpdespon@vub.ac.be

**DEVROYE Luc (Pr.)** School of Computer Science McGill University 3480 University Street MONTREAL H3A 2K6 (Canada) (CANADA); Tel: 1-514-398.3738 - Fax: 1-

514-398.3883 - Email: luc@cs.mcgill.ca

**DEWE Walthère (Mr.)** GlaxoSmithKline Biologicals Rue de l'Institut, 89 B-1330 RIXENSART (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/656.42.57 - Fax: - Email: walthere.dewe@gskbio.com

**DHAENE Geert (Pr.)** Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Centrum voor Economische Studieën Naamsestraat, 69 B-3000 LEUVEN (BELGIUM); Tel: 016/32.67.98 - Fax: 016/32.67.96 - Email: geert.dhaene@econ.kuleuven.be

**D'HOORE William (Pr)** Université Catholique de Louvain Ecole de Santé Publique Clos Chapelle-aux-champs, 30, bte 3037 B-1200 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/764.34.39 - Fax: 02/764.34.35 - Email: dhoore@hosp.ucl.ac.be

**DIERCKX Goedele (Mrs.)** Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Universitair Centrum voor Statistics W. de Croylaan, 54 B-3001 HEVERLEE (BELGIUM); Tel: 016/32.27.87 - Fax: 016/32.28.31 - Email: Goedele.Dierckx@ucs.kuleuven.be

**DING Huijuan (Mrs)** Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Research Center ORSTAT Naamsestraat, 69 B-3000 LEUVEN (BELGIUM); Tel: 016/32.69.27 - Fax: 016/32.67.32 - Email: huijuan.ding@econ.kuleuven.be

**DONICA Margarita (Mrs)** Bristol Myers Squibb Co. Parc de l'Alliance Avenue de Finlande, 8 B-1420 BRAINE L'ALLEUD (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/352.76.60 - Fax: 02/352.78.00 - Email: margarita.donica@bms.com

**DONNEAU Anne-Françoise (Mrs)** Université de Liège Informatique médicale et biostatistique CHU, Sart Tilman (B23) B-4000 LIEGE (BELGIUM); Tel: 04/366.47.90 - Fax: 04/366.25.96 - Email: afdonneau@ulg.ac.be

**DONY Julia (Mrs)** Vrije Universiteit Brussel Pleinlaan, 2 B-1050 BRUSSELS (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/629.34.74 - Fax: 02/629.34.95 - Email: jdony@vub.ac.be

**DOUHA Martine (Mrs)** GLAXO-SMITHKLINE rue de l'institut, 89 B-1330 RIXENSART (BELGIUM); Tel: - - Fax: - - Email: martine.douha@gskbio.com

**DRAMAIX - WILMET Michele (Pr)** Université Libre de Bruxelles Ecole de Santé Publique, Laboratoire Stat. Med. Route de Lennik, 808 B-1070 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/555.40.51 - Fax: 02/555.40.47 - Email: michele.dramaix@ulb.ac.be

**DROESBEKE Jean-Jacques (Pr)** Université Libre de Bruxelles L.M.T.D. Avenue Jeanne, 44 C.P. 124 B-1050 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/650.34.38 - Fax: 02/650.34.66 - Email: jjdroesb@ulb.ac.be

**DUBOIS Cécile (Mrs.)** UCB Pharma R&D R8 - Biostatistics Chemin du Foriest B-1420 BRAINE-L'ALLEUD (BELGIUM); Tel: 02 - 386 23 37 - Fax: 02 - 386 30 44 - Email: Cecile.Dubois@ucb-group.com

**DUBOIS Cécilia (Mrs)** UCB Pharma R&D R8 - Biostatistics Chemin du Foriest B-1420 BRAINE L'ALLEUD (BELGIUM); Tel: 02-386.35.33 - Fax: 02-386.30.44 -

Email: Cecilia.Dubois@ucb-group.com

**DUCHATEAU Luc (Dr)** University of Ghent - Faculty of Veterinary Sc. Physiology, Biochemistry & Biometrics Salisburylaan, 133 B-9820 MERELBEKE (BELGIUM); Tel: 09/264.73.32 - Fax: 09/264.74.99 - Email: luc.duchateau@rug.ac.be

**EDRICH Pascal (Mr)** UCB Pharma R&D R8 - Biostatistics Chemin du Foriest B-1420 BRAINE L'ALLEUD (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/386.30.33 - Fax: 02/386.30.44 - Email: pascal.edrich@ucb-group.com

**EINMAHL Uwe (Pr.)** Dept. Wiskunde VUB Pleinlaan, 2 B-1050 BRUSSEL (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/629.34.89 - Fax: 02/629.34.95 - Email: ueinmahl@vub.ac.be

**EL GHOUGH Anouar (Mr)** UCL Institut de Statistique Voie du Roman Pays, 20 B-1348 LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE (BELGIUM); Tel: 010/47.88.65 - Fax: 010/47.30.32 - Email: anouar.elghouch@uclouvain.be

**ESCH Louis (Pr.)** Université de Liège HEC-Ecole de Gestion (Bât N1) Rue Louvrex, 14 B-4000 LIEGE (BELGIUM); Tel: 04-232.73.00 - Fax: 04-232.72.40 - Email: Louis.Esch@ulg.ac.be

**FAES Christel (Mrs)** Universiteit Hasselt Centrum voor Statistiek Campus Diepenbeek Agoralaan, Gebouw D B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel: 011/26.81.11 - Fax: 011-26.81.99 - Email: christel.faes@uhasselt.be

**FAUCONNIER Cécile (Mrs)** Université de Liège HEC-Ecole de Gestion (B31) Bd du Rectorat, 7 B-4000 LIEGE (BELGIUM); Tel: 04/366.46.81 - Fax: 04/366.28.21 - Email: c.fauconnier@ulg.ac.be

**FILS Jean-François (Mr)** SGS Life Science Services Generaal de Wittelaan, 198 B-2800 MECHELEN (BELGIUM); Tel: 015/29.93.68 - Fax: - Email: jean.francois.fils@sgs.com

**FIORINI Alessandro (Mr)** Via di Scorticabove, 53-B I-00156 ROME (ITALY); Tel: +39/340.309.78.80 - Fax: - Email:

**FORTPIED Catherine (Mrs)** UCB Pharma R&D R8 - Biostatistics Chemin du Foriest B-1420 BRAINE L'ALLEUD (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/386.30.29 - Fax: 02/386.30.44 - Email: catherine.fortpied@ucb-group.com

**FOURNEAU Marc (Mr.)** GlaxoSmithKline Biologicals Manager Biometrics - Adults & Internat. Vaccines Rue de l'Institut, 89 B-1330 RIXENSART (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/656.87.90 - Fax: 02/656.91.32 - Email: Marc.Fourneau@gskbio.com

**FRANCART Julie (Mrs)** Université Catholique de Louvain Clos Chapelle-aux-Champs, 30/58 B-1200 BRUSSELS (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/764.33.37 - Fax: 02/764.33.28 - Email: julie.francart@epid.ucl.ac.be

**FRANCIS Stephen (Mr)** Bristol-Myers Squibb Parc de l'Alliance Avenue de Finlande, 8 B-1420 BRAINE-L'ALLEUD (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/352.77.74 - Fax: 02/352.78.00 -

Email: [stephen.francis@bms.com](mailto:stephen.francis@bms.com)

**FRANCOIS Nancy (Mrs)** UCL - Institut de Statistique Voie du Roman Pays, 20 B-1348 LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE (BELGIUM); Tel: - Fax: - Email: francois@stat.ucl.ac.be

**FRANK Bernard (Mr)** Avenue Demolder, 100 B-1342 LIMELETTE (BELGIUM); Tel: - Fax: - Email: bernard.frank@sgs.com

**FRANQUET Ann (Mrs)** IDDI Avenue Provinciale, 30 B-1340 OTTIGNIES–Louvain-la-Neuve (BELGIUM); Tel: 010/61.44.44 - Fax: 010/61.88.88 - Email: ann.franquet@iddi.com

**GADDAH Auguste (Mr)** Universiteit Hasselt Center for statistics Campus Diepenbeek Agoralaan, Gebouw D B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel: 011/26.82.97 - Fax: 011/26.82.99 - Email: auguste.gaddah@uhasselt.be

**GARCIA ZATTERA Maria José (Mrs)** Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Biostatistical Centre, U.Z. Sint-Rafaël Kapucijnenvoer, 35 B-3000 LEUVEN (BELGIUM); Tel: 016/33.68.92 - 016/33.68.87 - Fax: 016/33.70.15 - Email: MariaJose.GarciaZattera@med.kuleuven.be

**GARROI Jean-Jacques (Mr)** Rue Thiniheid, 99 B-4801 STEMBERT (BELGIUM); Tel: 087/22.64.09 - Fax: - Email:

**GEENENS Gery (Mr)** Université Catholique de Louvain Institut de Statistique Voie du Roman Pays, 20 B-1348 LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE (BELGIUM); Tel: 010/47.30.53 - Fax: 010/47.30.32 - Email: gery.geenens@uclouvain.be

**GENICOT Bruno (Dr)** Avenue des Sarcelles, 25 B-1410 WATERLOO (BELGIUM); Tel: 02-351.44.87 - Fax: - Email:

**GERARD Paul (Pr.)** Ulg - Institut de Mathématique (Bât B37) Service de Statistique Grande Traverse, 12 B-4000 LIEGE (BELGIUM); Tel: 04-366.93.84 - 04-368.85.56 - Fax: 04-366.95.47 - Email: paul.gerard@ulg.ac.be

**GEYS Helena (Dr)** Johnson & Johnson, PRD Turnhoutseweg, 30 B-2340 BEERSE (BELGIUM); Tel: 014/60.67.19 - Fax: - Email: hgeys@prdbe.jnj.com

**GIEZEK Hilde (Mrs)** Merck Sharp & Dhome Clos du Lynx, 5 B-1200 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: - - Fax: - - Email: Hilde\_Giezek@merck.com

**GIJBELS Irène (Pr)** Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Universitair Centrum voor Statistiek Celestijnenlaan, 200B B-3001 HEVERLEE (BELGIUM); Tel: 016/32.20.18 - Fax: 016/32.28.31 - Email: irene.gijbels@wis.kuleuven.be

**GILLES Leen (Mrs)** Statielei, 129 B-2640 MORTSEL (BELGIUM); Tel: 0495/89.29.66 - Fax: - Email: gillesle2003@yahoo.com

**GILLET Marc (Mr.)** GlaxoSmithKline Biologicals Rue de l'Institut, 89 B-1330 RIXENSART (BELGIUM); Tel: 02-656.89.75 - Fax: 02-656.64.14 - Email: Marc.Gillet@gskbio.com

**GLAVIE Christian (Mr)** National Bank of Belgium Boulevard de Berlaimont, 14 B-1000 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/221.29.37 - Fax: 02/221.31.34 - Email: christian.glavie@nbb.be

**GOEGEBEUR Yuri (Mr.)** University of Southern Denmark Department of statistics J.B. Winslows Vej, 9 DK-5000 ODENSE (DENMARK); Tel: +45.6550.3360 - Fax: +45.6550.3345 - Email: yuri.goegebeur@stat.sdu.dk

**GOETGELUK Sylvie (Mrs)** Universiteit Gent Krijgslaan, 281 S9 B-9000 GENT (BELGIUM); Tel: 09/264.48.84 - Fax: 09/264.49.95 - Email: sylvie.goetgeluk@ugent.be

**GOETGHEBEUR Els (Pr)** Universiteit Gent TWI Krijgslaan, 281 - S9 B-9000 GENT (BELGIUM); Tel: 09-264.48.11 - Fax: 09-264.49.95 - Email: els.goetghebeur@ugent.be

**GOOS Peter Philiep (Mr)** University of Antwerp Dpt of Mathematics, Statistics & Actuarial Science Prinsstraat, 13 B-2000 ANTWERPEN (BELGIUM); Tel: 03/220.40.59 - Fax: 03/220.48.17 - Email: Peter.Goos@ua.ac.be

**GOVAERTS Bernadette (Pr.)** Institut de Statistique Université Catholique de Louvain Voie du Roman Pays, 20 B-1348 LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE (BELGIUM); Tel: 010-47.43.13 - 010-47.43.14 - Fax: 010-47.30.32 - Email: bernadette.govaerts@uclouvain.be

**HABIMANA Laurence (Mrs)** Université Catholique de Louvain Ecole de Santé Publique Clos Chapelle-aux-Champs, 30 (bte 3058) B-1200 BRUSSELS (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/764.33.20 - Fax: 02/764.33.28 - Email: laurence.habimana@epid.ucl.ac.be

**HAESBROECK Gentiane (Pr)** Université de Liège Institut de Mathématique Grande Traverse, 12 (B37) B-4000 LIEGE (BELGIUM); Tel: 04/366.95.94 - Fax: - - Email: g.haesbroeck@ulg.ac.be

**HALLIN Marc (Pr)** Université Libre de Bruxelles Institut de Statistique Boulevard du Triomphe CP 210 B-1050 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/650.58.86 - 02/650.59.00 - Fax: 02/650.58.99 - Email: mhallin@ulb.ac.be

**HARDY André (Pr.)** Facultés Univ. Notre-Dame de la Paix Département de mathématique Rempart de la Vierge, 8 B-5000 NAMUR (BELGIUM); Tel: 081/72.49.05 - 081/72.49.25 - Fax: 081/72.49.14 - Email: andre.hardy@fundp.ac.be

**HENS Niel (Dr)** Universiteit Hasselt Centrum voor Statistiek Campus Diepenbeek Agoralaan, Gebouw D B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel: 011/26.82.32 - Fax: 011/26.82.99 - Email: niel.hens@uhasselt.be

**HEUCHENNE Cédric (Mr)** Université de Liège Statistique appliquée Boulevard du Rectorat, 7 B-4000 LIEGE (BELGIUM); Tel: 04/366.56.94 - Fax: 04/366.31.20 - Email: C.Heuchenne@ulg.ac.be

**HUBERT Mia (Pr)** Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Department of mathematics Celestijnenlaan, 200B B-3001 LEUVEN (BELGIUM); Tel: 016/32.20.23 - Fax:

016/32.28.31 - Email: [mia.hubert@wis.kuleuven.be](mailto:mia.hubert@wis.kuleuven.be)

**ION Roxana Alice (Dr)** Janssen Pharmaceutica Turnhoutseweg, 30 B-2340 BEERSE (BELGIUM); Tel: 01/460.39.10 - Fax: - Email: rion@prdbe.jnj.com

**JACOBS Tom (Mr.)** Universiteit Hasselt Centrum voor Statistiek Campus Diepenbeek Agoralaan, Gebouw D B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel: 011/26.82.97 - Fax: 011/26.82.99 - Email: tom.jacobs@uhasselt.be

**JANSEN Ivy (Mrs)** Universiteit Hasselt Centrum voor Statistiek Campus Diepenbeek Agoralaan, Gebouw D B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel: 011/26.82.33 - Fax: 011/26.82.99 - Email: Ivy.jansen@uhasselt.be

**JANSSEN Paul (Pr)** Universiteit Hasselt Centrum voor Statistiek Campus Diepenbeek Agoralaan, Gebouw D B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel: 011-26.82.36 - Fax: 011-26.82.99 - Email: paul.janssen@uhasselt.be

**JANSSENS Luc (Mr.)** Johnson & Johnson Pharmaceutical R&D Turnhoutseweg 30/6787 B-2340 BEERSE (BELGIUM); Tel: 014/60.67.87 - Fax: - Email: LJansse6@prdbe.jnj.com

**JARA VALLEJOS Alejandro (Mr)** Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Biostatistical Centre, U.Z. Sint-Rafaël Kapucijnenvoer, 35 B-3000 LEUVEN (BELGIUM); Tel: 016/33.68.92 - 016/33.68.87 - Fax: 016/33.70.15 - Email: Alejandro.JaraVallejos@med.kuleuven.ac.be

**JONES John T. (Mr)** UCB Pharma, Inc. Lake Park Drive, 1950 30080 SMYRNA, GA (USA); Tel: 770.970.8563 - Fax: 770.970.8909 - Email: John.Jones@UCB-group.com

**JULLION Astrid (Mrs)** Université Catholique de Louvain Institut de Statistique Voie du Roman Pays, 20 B-1348 LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE (BELGIUM); Tel: 010/47.94.01 - Fax: 010/47.30.32 - Email: astrid.jullion@uclouvain.be

**JUSTENS Daniel (Dr)** Haute Ecole Ferrer Département Economique Long Place Anneessens, 11 B-1000 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/551.02.09 - Fax: 02/551.02.25 - Email: daniel.justens@brunette.brucity.be

**KASIM Adetayo (Mr)** Hasselt University Center for Statistics Agoralaan - Building D B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel: 011/26.82.93 - Fax: 011/26.82.99 - Email: adetayo.kasim@uhasselt.be

**KAUFMAN Leonard (Pr.)** Faculteit Geneeskunde Vrije Universiteit Brussel Laarbeeklaan, 103 B-1090 BRUSSEL (BELGIUM); Tel: - Fax: +32-2-477.4000 - Email: leon@minf.vub.ac.be

**KESTEMONT Bruno (Mr.)** Statistics Belgium (NIS/INS) Rue de Louvain, 44 B-1000 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/548.66.61 - Fax: 02/548.64.78 - Email: bkest@ulb.ac.be

**KEY PRATO Maria (Mrs)** UCL Institute of Statistics Voie du Roman Pays, 20 B-1348 LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE (BELGIUM); Tel: 010/47.88.60 - Fax: 010/47.30.32 -

Email: mariakey@stat.ucl.ac.be

**KNAPEN Koen (Mr)** SAS Institute NV Hertenbergstraat, 6 B-3080 TERVUREN (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/766.07.00 - Fax: 02/766.07.77 - Email: koen.knapen@sbx.sas.com

**KRISTANTO Paulus (Dr.)** Pharmionic Systems Espace Entreprise de Visé Rue des Cyclistes Frontière, 24 B-4600 VISE (BELGIUM); Tel: 04/374.86.17 - Fax: 04/374.86.22 - Email: paulus.kristanto@pharmionic.com

**KUBUSHISHI Tite (Dr)** SPF Santé publique, Sécurité de la Ch aliment. Direction générale des Soins de Santé Primaires Eurostation, Place Victor HORTA 40 bte 10 B-1060 BRUXELLES (BELGIQUE); Tel: 02/524 9718 - Fax: 02/524 9814 - Email: tite.kubushishi@health.fgov.be

**LAENEN Annouschka (Mrs)** Universiteit Hasselt Centrum voor Statistiek Campus Diepenbeek Agoralaan, Gebouw D B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel: 011-26.82.84 - Fax: 011-26.82.99 - Email: Annouschka.Laenen@uhasselt.be

**LAMBERT Philippe (Pr)** Université de Liège, ISHS (B31) Méthodes quantitatives en sciences sociales Boulevard du Rectorat, 7 B-4000 LIEGE (BELGIUM); Tel: 04/366.59.90 - Fax: 04/366.47.51 - Email: P.Lambert@ulg.ac.be

**LANGE Anne-Catherine (Mrs)** Pharmionic Systems Espace Entreprise de Visé Rue des Cyclistes Frontière, 24 B-4600 VISE (BELGIUM); Tel: 04/374.86.36 - Fax: 04/374.86.22 - Email: ac.lange@pharmionic.com

**LAUWERS Marie-Christine (Dr)** B-2970 SCHILDE (BELGIUM); Tel: 03/353.72.40 - Fax: - Email: mc.lauwers@scarlet.be

**LE BAILLY DE TILLEGHEM Céline (Mrs)** UCL Institut de Statistique Voie du Roman Pays, 20 B-1348 LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE (BELGIUM); Tel: 010/47.88.17 - Fax: 010/47.30.32 - Email: celine.lebailly@uclouvain.be

**LE BOULENGE Eric (Pr.)** AGRO/MILA/ENGE - Environmetry and Geomatics Unit Université Catholique de Louvain Place Croix du Sud, 2 BP 16 B-1348 LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE (BELGIUM); Tel: 010-47.44.88 - Fax: 010-47.88.98 - Email: leboulenge@biom.ucl.ac.be

**LEBACQ Marie (Mrs)** SGS Life Science Services Vieux Chemin du Poète B-1300 WAVRE (BELGIUM); Tel: 010/42.11.31 - Fax: 010/42.11.06 - Email: Marie.Lebacq@SGS.com

**LEBRUN Luc (Mr)** Statistics Belgium (NIS/INS) Rue de Louvain, 44 B-1000 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/548.62.64 - Fax: 02/548.62.62 - Email:

**LEBRUN Pierre (Mr)** Université de Liège (B36) Département de Pharmacie (Chimie analytique) Avenue de l'Hôpital, 1 B-4000 LIEGE (BELGIUM); Tel: 0497/75.54.44 - Fax: - - Email: plebrun@ulg.ac.be

**LEDEINE Jean-Marie (Ir.)** 23, rue aux cailloux B-5080 RHISNES (BELGIUM);

Tel: - Fax: - Email:

**LEDENT Edouard (Mr)** avenue Alphonse Allard, 112 B-1420 BRAINE L'ALLEUD (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/387.32.60 - Fax: - Email: ledent@tiscalinet.be

**LEFEVRE Claude (Pr)** Université Libre de Bruxelles Institut de Statistique Bd. du Triomphe CP 210 B-1050 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/650.58.94 - 02/650.58.98 - Fax: 02/650.58.99 - Email: clefevre@ulb.ac.be

**LEGRAND Catherine (Mrs)** Université catholique de Louvain Institut de Statistique Voie du Roman Pays, 20 B-1348 LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE (BELGIUM); Tel: 010/47.87.98 - Fax: 010/47.30.32 - Email: catherine.legrand@uclouvain.be

**LESAFFRE Emmanuel (Pr)** Biostatistical Centre UZ - St. Rafael Kapucijnenvoer, 35 B-3000 LEUVEN (BELGIUM); Tel: 016-33.68.96 - 016-33.68.92 - Fax: 016-33.69.00 - Email: emmanuel.lesaffre@med.kuleuven.be

**LIN Dan (Mrs)** University of Hasselt Center for Statistics Agoralaan - Building D B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel: 011/26.82.83 - Fax: 011/26.82.99 - Email: dan.lin@luc.ac.be

**LITIERE Saskia (Mrs)** Universiteit Hasselt Centrum voor Statistiek Campus Diepenbeek Agoralaan, Gebouw D B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel: 011/26.82.82 - Fax: 011/26.82.99 - Email: saskia.litiere@uhasselt.be

**LOEYS Tom (Dr.)** Merck Sharp & Dohme (Europe), Inc. Clinical Biostatistics Clos du Lynx 5 B-1200 WOLUWE (BELGIUM); Tel: - Fax: - Email: Tom\_Loeyts@merck.com

**LOUCHARD Guy (Pr)** Université Libre de Bruxelles Département d'Informatique Campus de la Plaine CP 212, Bld du Triomphe B-1050 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/650.56.13 - Fax: 02/650.56.09 - Email: louchard@ulb.ac.be

**LUCAS Mireille (Mrs.)** Rue des Pavieurs, 4 B-1420 BRAINE-L'ALLEUD (BELGIUM); Tel: - Fax: - Email:

**LUIJTENS Kristel (Mrs.)** UCB Pharma R&D R8 - Biostatistics Chemin du Foriest B-1420 BRAINE-L'ALLEUD (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/386.30.30 - Fax: 02/386.30.44 - Email: kristel.luijtens@ucb-group.com

**LUMINET Denis (Dr)** Statistics Belgium (NIS/INS) Rue de Louvain, 44 B-1000 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/548.66.05 - Fax: 02/548.66.03 - Email: denis.luminet@statbel.mineco.fgov.be

**MAGIS David (Mr)** Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Research Group of Quantitative Psychology Tiensestraat, 102 - Bus 3721 B-3000 LEUVEN (BELGIUM); Tel: 016/32.61.23 - Fax: - Email: David.Magis@psy.kuleuven.be

**MALBECQ William (Dr)** Merck Sharp & Dohme Clos du Lynx, 5 B-1200 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02-776.64.47 - Fax: 02-776.62.96 - Email: william\_malbecq@merck.com

**MALICE Marie-Pierre (Dr.)** Merck Sharp & Dohme Clos du Lynx, 5 B-1200 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02-776.64.46 - 02-776.64.43 - Fax: 02-776.62.96 - Email: mariepierre\_malice@merck.com

**MARCHAL Jean-Louis (Dr)** Elisabeth Willemslaan, 9 B-3150 WESPELAAR (BELGIUM); Tel: 016/60.24.87 - Fax: - Email: jl.marchal@wordlonline.be

**MARINGWA John T. (Mr)** Universiteit Hasselt Universitaire Campus, Gebow D B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel: 011/26.82.85 - Fax: 011/26.82.99 - Email: john.maringwa@uhasselt.be

**MASSAAD Rachid (Mr)** Merck Sharp & Dohme Clos du Lynx, 5 B-1200 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/776.60.56 - Fax: 02/776.62.96 - Email: rachid\_massaad@merck.com

**MASSONNET Goele (Mrs)** Universiteit Hasselt Centrum voor Statistiek Campus Diepenbeek Agoralaan, Gebouw D B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel: 011/26.82.44 - Fax: 011/26.82.99 - Email: goele.massonnet@uhasselt.be

**MATTIACCI Maria-Rosa (Mrs.)** Av. de Boetendal, 9 B-1180 BRUSSELS (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/375.23.42 - Fax: 02/375.23.42 - Email: mrmattiacci@hotmail.com

**MENTEN Joris (Mr)** Willem de Croylaan, 49/22 B-3001 HEVERLEE (BELGIUM); Tel: 0495/275.393 - Fax: - Email: joris.menten@advalvas.be

**MICHIELS Bart (Mr.)** Janssen Pharmaceutica Turnhoutseweg, 30 B-2340 BEERSE (BELGIUM); Tel: 014/60.20.08 - Fax: - Email: bmichiel@prdbe.jnj.com

**MILANO Robert (Mr)** Direction Générale Statistique et Information économique Rue de Louvain, 44 B-1000 BRUSSELS (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/548.65.51 - Fax: - - Email: robert.milano@economie.fgov.be

**MOERKERKE Beatrijs (Mrs)** Ghent University Dept of Applied Mathematics and Computer Science Krijgslaan, 281/S9 B-9000 GENT (BELGIUM); Tel: 09/264.47.56 - Fax: 09/264.49.95 - Email: Beatrijs.Moerkerke@UGent.be

**MOLENBERGHS Geert (Pr)** Universiteit Hasselt Centrum voor Statistiek Campus Diepenbeek Agoralaan, Gebouw D B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel: 011-26.82.38 - 011-26.82.02 - Fax: 011.26.82.99 - Email: geert.molenberghs@uhasselt.be

**MOTTA Giovanni (Mr)** Université Catholique de Louvain Institut de Statistique Voie du Roman Pays, 20 B-1348 LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE (BELGIUM); Tel: 010/47.88.56 - Fax: 010/47.30.32 - Email: giovanni.motta@uclouvain.be

**NEUTS Marcel (Pr.)** 925 N. Smoke Tree Circle - Tucson, AZ 85745 U.S.A. (USA); Tel: 1-520-884.9034 - Fax: 1-520-884.7163 - Email: marcel@mindspring.com

**NEVEU Jacques (Pr.)** square Lagarde, 4 F-75005 PARIS (FRANCE); Tel: 33 1 43 36 18 67 - Fax: - Email:



**NOIRHOMME-FRAITURE Monique (Pr.)** Facultés Univ. Notre-Dame de la Paix  
Institut d'Informatique Rue Grandgagnage, 21 B-5000 NAMUR (BELGIUM); Tel:  
081/72.49.79 - Fax: 081/72.49.67 - Email: monique.noirhomme@info.fundp.ac.be

**NOIROUX Laurence (Mrs)** S-Clinica Chaussée de Boondael, 6 B-1050  
BRUXELLES (BELGIQUE); Tel: 02/645.05.63 - Fax: 02/645.05.69 - Email:  
laurence.noiroux@s-clinica.com

**NOZAY Florence (Mrs)** Glaxosmithkline Biologicals Rue de l'Institut, 89 B-1330  
RIXENSART (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/656.79.22 - Fax: 02/656.81.13 - Email:  
florence.nozay@gskbio.com

**NTWA Jean-Pierre (Mr)** Statistics Belgium (NIS/INS) Rue de Louvain, 44 B-1000  
BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/548.68.54 - Fax: 02/548.62.32 - Email:  
jeanpierre.ntwa@statbel.mineco.fgov.be

**NYS Marleen (Mrs)** Bristol-Myers Squibb Parc de l'Alliance Avenue de Finlande, 8 B-  
1420 BRAINE-L'ALLEUD (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/352.78.17 - Fax: - Email:  
marleen.nys@bms.com

**OGER Robert (Dr)** Avenue du Comté, 26 B-5030 GEMBLOUX (BELGIUM); Tel: -  
Fax: - Email:

**OMEY Edward (Dr)** EHSAL Stormstraat, 2 B-1000 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel:  
02/210.12.11 - Fax: 02/217.64.64 - Email: edward.omey@ehsal.be

**ONGHENA Patrick (Pr)** Departement Pedagogische Wetenschappen Katholieke  
Universiteit Leuven Vesaliusstraat, 2 B-3000 LEUVEN (BELGIUM); Tel: 016-32.59.54  
- 016-32.62.01 - Fax: 016-32.59.34 - Email: patrick.onghena@ped.kuleuven.be

**OTOUL Christian (IR)** UCB Pharma R&D R8 - Biostatistics Chemin du Foriest B-  
1420 BRAINE-L'ALLEUD (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/386.25.04 - Fax: 02/386.30.44 -  
Email: christian.otoul@ucb-group.com

**OTTOY Jean-Pierre (Pr)** University of Ghent Coupure Links, 653 B-9000 GENT  
(BELGIUM); Tel: 09/264.59.34 - 09/264.59.40 - Fax: 09/264.62.20 - Email:  
JeanPierre.Ottoy@rug.ac.be

**PAINDAVEINE Davy (Pr)** Université de Bruxelles Campus de la Plaine, CP 210  
Boulevard du Triomphe B-1050 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/650.58.92 - Fax:  
02/650.58.99 - Email: dpaindav@ulb.ac.be

**PALM Rudy (Pr)** Unité de Statistique et Informatique Faculté universitaire des  
Sciences Agronomiques Av. de la Faculté d'Agronomie, 8 B-5030 GEMBLOUX  
(BELGIUM); Tel: 081-62.25.12 - Fax: 081-61.25.18 - Email: statinfo@fsagx.ac.be

**PARIS José (Pr.)** Institut de Statistique Université Catholique de Louvain Voie du  
Roman Pays, 20 B-1348 LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE (BELGIUM); Tel: 010-47.42.81 -  
010-47.43.14 - Fax: 010-47.30.32 - Email: jose.paris@uclouvain.be



**PEETERS Monika (Dr)** TIBOTEC-VIRCO Gen de Wittelaan, L11, B4 B-2800  
MECHELEN (BELGIUM); Tel: 0478/34.17.17 - Fax: 015/28.63.46 - Email:  
MONIKA.peeters@vircolab.com

**PLANCHON Viviane (Mrs.)** Centre wallon de Recherches Agronomiques Biométrie -  
gestion des données & agrométéorologie Rue de Liroux, 9 B-5030 GEMBLoux  
(BELGIUM); Tel: 081/62.65.71 - Fax: 081/62.65.59 - Email: planchon@cra.wallonie.be

**POULLET Ghislain (Mr)** Banque Nationale de Belgique Boulevard de Berlaymont, 3  
B-1000 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/221.24.27 - Fax: 02/221.32.30 - Email:  
ghislain.poulet@nbb.be

**PURCARU Oana (Dr)** Place Saint Antoine, 5, BP 3 B-1040 BRUXELLES  
(BELGIUM); Tel: - - Fax: - - Email: Oana\_purcaru@yahoo.com

**QUATAERT Paul (Ir)** Stropkaai, 51 B-9000 GENT (BELGIUM); Tel: 09/220.08.39  
- Fax: - Email: paul.quataert@freebel.net

**QUINAUX Emmanuel (Mr.)** IDDI Avenue Provinciale, 30 B-1340 OTTIGNIES  
(BELGIUM); Tel: 010/62.15.78 - Fax: 010/61.88.88 - Email:  
emmanuel.quinaux@iddi.com

**RASSON Jean-Paul (Pr.)** Facultés Univ. Notre-Dame de la Paix Département de  
mathématique Rempart de la Vierge, 8 B-5000 NAMUR (BELGIUM); Tel:  
081/72.49.28 - 081/72.49.29 - Fax: 081/72.49.14 - Email: jpr@math.fundp.ac.be

**REMICHE Marie-Ange (Dr)** Université Libre de Bruxelles SMG - CP 210/01 Bld du  
Triomphe B-1050 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/650.29.15 - Fax: - Email:  
mremiche@ulb.ac.be

**REMON Marcel (Pr.)** Facultés Univ. Notre-Dame de la Paix Département de  
mathématique Rempart de la Vierge, 8 B-5000 NAMUR (BELGIUM); Tel:  
081/72.49.30 - Fax: 081/72.49.14 - Email: marcel.remon@fundp.ac.be

**RENARD Didier (Dr.)** Novartis Pharma AG Lichtstrasse, 35 CH-4056 BASEL  
(SWITZERLAND); Tel: +41 61/324.18.63 - Fax: +41 61/324.35.27 - Email:  
didier.renard@novartis.com

**REY William (Dr.)** Rue Fontaine des Gattes, 31 1470 Bousval (BELGIUM); Tel:  
010/61 89 22 - Fax: - Email: w\_rey@TVCableNet.be

**RITTER Christian (Dr.)** Institut de Statistique Université Catholique de Louvain Voie  
du Roman Pays, 20 B-1348 LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE (BELGIUM); Tel: 010-47.34.79 -  
Fax: 010-47.43.01 - Email: christian.ritter@uclouvain.be

**RIZOPOULOS Dimitris (Mr)** Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Biostatistical Centre  
Kapucijnenvoer, 35 B-3000 LEUVEN (BELGIUM); Tel: 016/33.68.99 - Fax:  
016/33.70.15 - Email: dimitris.rizopoulos@med.kuleuven.be

**ROBERT Annie (Pr)** UCL- Ecole de santé publique - Unité d'Epidémiologie Clos Chapelle-aux-Champs, 30 boîte 30.34 B-1200 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/764.33.21 - 02/764.30.27 - Fax: 02/764.33.28 - Email: annie.robert@epid.ucl.ac.be

**ROELANT Ella (Mrs)** Universiteit Gent Vakgroep Toegepaste Wiskunde en Informatica Krijgslaan, 281, S9 B-9000 GENT (BELGIUM); Tel: 09/264.47.56 - Fax: 09/264.49.95 - Email: Ella.Roelant@ugent.be

**ROLIN Jean-Marie (Pr.)** Institut de Statistique Université Catholique de Louvain Voie du Roman Pays, 20 B-1348 LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE (BELGIUM); Tel: 010-47.43.33 - 010-47.43.14 - Fax: 010-47.30.32 - Email: jean-marie.rolin@uclouvain.be

**ROSILLON Dominique (Dr.)** UCB SA Chemin du Foriest B-1420 BRAINE-L'ALLEUD (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/386.63.70 - Fax: - Email: Dominique.rosillon@ucb-group.com

**ROUSSEAU Réjane (Mrs)** Université Catholique de Louvain Institut de Statistique Voie du Roman Pays, 20 B-1348 LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE (BELGIUM); Tel: 010/47.88.60 - Fax: 010/47.30.32 - Email: rejane.rousseau@uclouvain.be

**ROUSSEEUW Peter (Pr.)** University of Antwerp Department of Mathematics and Computer Science Middelheimlaan, 1 B-2020 ANTWERPEN (BELGIUM); Tel: 03/265.39.05 - Fax: 03/265.37.77 - Email: peter.rousseeuw@ua.ac.be

**RUSCH Sarah (Mrs)** Johnson & Johnson Pharmaceutical R&D Biometrics and Clinical Informatics Turnhoutseweg, 30 B-2340 BEERSE (BELGIUM); Tel: 014/60.35.95 - Fax: 014/60.58.02 - Email: srusch@prdbe.jnj.com

**SAWCHIK Javier (Dr)** UCB Chemin du Foriest B-1420 BRAINE-L'ALLEUD (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/386.25.16 - Fax: 02/386.35.58 - Email: j\_sawchik@yahoo.com.ar

**SCHUYTEN Gilberte (Pr.)** Ghent University Head Department Data Analysis Henri Dunantlaan, 1 B-9000 GENT (BELGIUM); Tel: 09-264.63.86 - Fax: 09-264.64.87 - Email: gilberte.schuyten@ugent.be

**SEGERS Johan (Pr)** Université Catholique de Louvain Institut de statistique Voie du Roman Pays, 20 B-1348 LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE (BELGIUM); Tel: 010/47.43.11 - Fax: 010/47.30.32 - Email: johan.segers@uclouvain.be

**SEIDEL Laurence (Mrs.)** Université de Liège Biostatistique CHU Sart Tilman, B35 B-4000 LIEGE (BELGIUM); Tel: 04/366.25.95 - Fax: 04/366.25.96 - Email: laurence.seidel@ulg.ac.be

**SERROYEN Jan (Mr)** Universiteit Hasselt Centrum voor Statistiek Campus Diepenbeek Agoralaan, Gebouw D B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel: 011/26.82.88 - Fax: 011/26.82.99 - Email: Jan.Serroyen@uhasselt.be

**SHKEDY Ziv (Mr)** Universiteit Hasselt Centrum voor Statistiek Campus Diepenbeek Agoralaan, Gebouw D B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel: 011/26.82.57 - Fax: - Email: ziv.shkedy@uhasselt.be

**SIMAR Léopold (Pr.)** Université Catholique de Louvain Institut de Statistique Voie du Roman Pays, 20 B-1348 LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE (BELGIUM); Tel: 010/47.43.08 - Fax: 010/47.30.32 - Email: leopold.simar@uclouvain.be

**SLOCK Peter (Mr)** Rijksdienst Voor Pensioenen TOUR DU MIDI B-1060 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: - Fax: - Email: peter.slock@skynet.be

**SPIESSENS Bart (Dr)** GlaxoSmithKline Biologicals Rue de l'Institut, 89 B-1330 RIXENSART (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/656.76.83 - Fax: 02/656.80.33 - Email: bart.spiessens@gskbio.com

**STRAETEMANS Roel (Dr)** Janssen pharmaceutica Turnhoutseweg, 30 B-2340 BEERSE (BELGIUM); Tel: 014/602744 - Fax: - Email: rstraete@prdbe.jnj.com

**STRUYF Anja (Mrs.)** University of Antwerp Faculty of Applied Economics Prinsstraat ,13 B-2000 ANTWERPEN (BELGIUM); Tel: 03/220.43.93 - Fax: - Email: anja.struyf@ua.ac.be

**SWAN Yvik (Mr)** Université Libre de Bruxelles Campus de la Plaine, CP210 Blvd du Triomphe B-1050 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/650.58.82 - Fax: - Email: yvswan@ulb.ac.be

**TALLOEN Willem (Mr)** Janssen Pharmaceutica Turnhoutseweg, 30 B-2340 BEERSE (BELGIUM); Tel: 014/60.34.34 - Fax: 014/60.58.02 - Email: wtalloen@prdbe.jnj.com

**TEODORESCU Bianca (Mrs)** UCL Institut de Statistique Voie du Roman Pays, 20 B-1348 LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE (BELGIUM); Tel: 010/47.88.28 - Fax: 010/47.30.32 - Email: bianca.teodorescu@uclouvain.be

**TEUGELS Jozef (Pr.)** Katholieke Universiteit Leuven University Center for Statistics W. de Croylaan, 54 B-3001 HEVERLEE (BELGIUM); Tel: 016/32.27.86 - Fax: 016/32.28.31 - Email: jef.teugels@wis.kuleuven.be

**THAS Olivier (Pr)** Universiteit Gent Coupure Links, 653 B-9000 GENT (BELGIUM); Tel: 09/264.59.33 - Fax: 09/264.62.20 - Email: olivier.thas@ugent.be

**THIJS Herbert (Dr)** Universiteit Hasselt Centrum voor Statistiek Campus Diepenbeek Agoralaan, Gebouw D B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel: 011/26.82.28 - Fax: 011/26.82.99 - Email: herbert.thijs@uhasselt.be

**THIJSEN Peter (Dr)** University of Antwerp St-Jacobstraat, 2 B-2000 ANTWERP (BELGIUM); Tel: 03/275.57.26 - Fax: - Email: peter.thijssen@ua.ac.be

**TIBALDI Fabian (Dr)** GSK Biologicals Rue de L'Institut, 89 B-1330 RIXENSART (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/656.42.56 - Fax: 02/656.80.44 - Email: fabian.tibaldi@gsk.com

**TILLE Yves (Pr)** Université de Neuchâtel Chaire de Statistique appliquée Espace de l'Europe, 4 - CP 827 CH 2002 NEUCHATEL (SWITZERLAND); Tel: 41 32 718 14 75

- Fax: 41 32 718 13 81 - Email: [yves.tille@unine.ch](mailto:yves.tille@unine.ch)

**TISTAERT Jurgen (Mr)** Bank Brussels Lambert (BBL) Risk Management  
Department Avenue Marnix, 24 B-1000 BRUSSELS (BELGIUM); Tel: 02-547.81.31 -  
02-452.85.93 - Fax: 02-547.86.80 - Email: Jurgen.Tistaert@bbl.be

**T'JOEN Caroline (Mrs)** Bristol-Myers-Squibb Parc de l'Alliance Avenue de Finlande,  
8 B-1420 BRAINE-L'ALLEUD (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/352.76.93 - Fax: - Email:  
caroline.tjoen@bms.com

**TORBEYNS Anne (Dr.)** Bristol-Myers-Squibb Parc de l'Alliance Avenue de Finlande,  
8 B-1420 BRAINE-L'ALLEUD (BELGIUM); Tel: 02-352.77.22 - 065-31.18.32 - Fax:  
02-351.26.79 - Email: torbeyna@bms.com

**TOUSSET Eric (Mr)** Pharmionic Systems Espace Entreprise de Visé Rue des  
Cyclistes Frontière, 24 B-4600 VISE (BELGIUM); Tel: 04/374.86.34 - Fax:  
04/374.86.22 - Email: eric.tousset@pharmionic.com

**TSONAKA Roula (Mrs)** Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Biostatistical Centre  
Kapucijnenvoer, 35 B-3000 LEUVEN (BELGIUM); Tel: 016/33.68.99 - Fax:  
016/33.70.15 - Email: spyridoula.tsonaka@med.kuleuven.be

**VAES Evelien (Mrs)** Université Catholique de Louvain Public Health School Clos  
Chapelle aux Champs, 30-58 B-1200 BRUSSELS (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/764.33.37 -  
Fax: 02/764.33.28 - Email: evelien.vaes@epid.ucl.ac.be

**VALENTE SOARES Filomena (Mrs)** Université Libre de Bruxelles Ecole de Santé  
Publique Route de Lennik, 808 B-1070 BRUSSELS (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/555.40.50 -  
Fax: 02/555.40.47 - Email: filomena.valente@ulb.ac.be

**VALKENBORG Dirk (Mr)** Universiteit Hasselt Center for Statistics Agoralaan,  
building D B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel: 011/26.82.92 - Fax: - Email:  
dirk.valkenborg@uhasselt.be

**VAN AELST Stefan (Mr.)** Ghent University Applied Maths and Computing  
Krijgslaan 281 S9 B-9000 GENT (BELGIUM); Tel: 09-2644908 - Fax: 09-2644995 -  
Email: stefan.vanaelst@rug.ac.be

**VAN BELLE Pascale (Mrs.)** GlaxoSmithKline Biologicals Rue de l'Institut, 89 B-  
1330 RIXENSART (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/656.82.40 - Fax: 02/656.80.33 - Email:  
Pascale.Van-Belle@gskbio.com

**VAN BELLEGEM Sébastien (Pr)** UCL Institute of Statistics Voie du Roman Pays,  
20 B-1348 LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE (BELGIUM); Tel: 010/47.86.49 - Fax: 010/47.30.32  
- Email: sebastien.vanbellegem@uclouvain.be

**VAN DEN POEL Dirk (Pr)** Ghent University Hoveniersberg, 24 9000 GENT  
(BELGIUM); Tel: 09/264.89.80 - Fax: 09/264.42.79 - Email:  
dirk.vandenpoel@rug.ac.be

**VAN KEILEGOM Ingrid (Dr)** Université Catholique de Louvain Institut de  
statistique Voie du Roman Pays, 20 B-1348 LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE (BELGIUM); Tel:

010/47.43.30 - Fax: 010/47.30.32 - Email: ingrid.vankeilegom@uclouvain.be  
**VAN MECHELEN Iven (Pr)** KU Leuven Departement Psychologie Tiensestraat, 102  
B-3000 LEUVEN (BELGIUM); Tel: 016/32.61.31 - Fax: 016/32.60.00 - Email:  
Iven.vanmechelen@psy.kuleuven.be

**VAN MESSEM Arnout (Mr)** Vrije Universiteit Brussels Mathematics department  
Pleinlaan, 2 B-1050 BRUSSELS (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/629.34.98 - Fax: 02/629.34.95 -  
Email: avmessem@vub.ac.be

**VAN OTTERDIJK Evi (Mrs)** UCB-Group Biometry Chemin du Foriest B-1420  
BRAINE-L'ALLEUD (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/386.35.55 - Fax: 02/386.35.58 - Email:  
evi.vanotterdijk@ucb-group.com

**VAN OUYTSEL Alexander (Mr)** rue de la Brise, 23 B-1400 NIVELLES  
(BELGIUM); Tel: 067/21.58.06 - Fax: - - Email: alexander.vanoytsel@tiscali.be

**VAN OYEN Herman (Pr.)** IPH - Scientific Institute of Public Health Unit of  
Epidemiology J. Wytmanstraat, 14 B-1050 BRUSSELS (BELGIUM); Tel: 02-  
642.50.29 - 02/642.50.37 - Fax: 02-642.54.10 - Email: herman.vanoyen@iph.fgov.be

**VAN SANDEN Suzy (Mrs)** Universiteit Hasselt Centrum voor Statistiek Campus  
Diepenbeek Agoralaan, Gebouw D B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel:  
011/26.82.81 - Fax: 011/26.82.99 - Email: suzy.vansanden@uhasselt.be

**VAN STEEN Kristel (Pr)** Krijgsbaan 147 D B-9140 TEMSE (BELGIUM); Tel: -  
Fax: - Email: kristel.vansteen@ugent.be

**VAN WILDER Philippe (Mr.)** Gebroeders Paters Abelooslaan, 20 B-1933  
STERREBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel: - Fax: - Email:

**VANBELLE Sophie (Mrs)** Université de Liège Informatique médicale et biostatistique  
CHU, Sart Tilman (B23) B-4000 LIEGE (BELGIUM); Tel: 04/366.47.90 - Fax:  
04/366.25.96 - Email: Sophie.Vanbelle@ulg.ac.be

**VANDEBOSCH An (Mrs)** Johnson & Johnson Pharmaceutical R&D Turnhoutseweg,  
30/5083 B-2340 BEERSE (BELGIUM); Tel: 014/60.50.83 - Fax: 014/60.58.02 - Email:  
avandebo@prdbe.jnj.com

**VANDEBROEK Martina (Pr.)** ORSTAT Katholieke Universiteit Leuven  
Naamsestraat, 69 B-3000 LEUVEN (BELGIUM); Tel: 016-32.69.75 - Fax: 016-  
32.67.32 - Email: martina.vandebroek@econ.kuleuven.be

**VANDENHENDE François (Mr.)** Clinbay Statistical Solution to Drug Development  
Rue Banterley, 80 B-1471 GENAPPE (BELGIUM); Tel: 067/77.19.41 - Fax:  
067/77.19.41 - Email: francois@clinbay.com

**VANDENHOOF Annick (Mrs)** Université Catholique de Louvain Public Health  
School Clos Chapelle-aux-Champs, 30.58 B-1200 BRUSSELS (BELGIUM); Tel:  
02/764.33.37 - Fax: 02/764.33.28 - Email: Annick.Vandenhooft@epid.ucl.ac.be



**VANDERHOEFT Camille (Dr.)** Vrije Universiteit Brussel Fac. Eco, Sociale en Politieke Wetenschappen Pleinlaan, 2 B-1000 BRUSSEL (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/629.22.85 - Fax: 02/629.21.86 - Email: Camille.Vanderhoeft@vub.ac.be

**VANDERSMISSEN Veerle (Mrs)** B-3500 HASSELT (BELGIUM); Tel: 011/21.12.37 - Fax: - Email:

**VANDERVIEREN Ellen (Mrs)** University of Antwerp Department of Mathematics and Computer Science Middelheimlaan, 1 B-2020 ANTWERPEN (BELGIUM); Tel: 03/265.38.59 - Fax: 03/265.37.77 - Email: ellen.vandervieren@ua.ac.be

**VANDORMAEL Kristel (Mrs.)** Merck Sharp & Dohme Clos du Lynx, 5 B-1200 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02-776.64.80 - Fax: 02-776.62.96 - Email: vandorma@merck.com

**VANGENEUGDEN Tony (Mr.)** B-3690 ZUTENDAAL (BELGIUM); Tel: - Fax: - Email:

**VANSTEELANDT Stijn (Mr)** University of Ghent Department of Applied Mathematics and computer sc. Krijgslaan, 281-S9 B-9000 GENT (BELGIUM); Tel: 09/264.47.76 - 09/232.11.91 - Fax: 09/264.49.95 - Email: stijn.vansteelandt@ugent.be

**VANVEGGEL Simon (Mr)** B-2000 ANTWERPEN (BELGIUM); Tel: 03/232.47.05 - Fax: - Email:

**VERAVERBEKE Noël (Pr)** Universiteit Hasselt Centrum voor Statistiek Campus Diepenbeek Agoralaan, Gebouw D B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel: 011/26.82.37 - Fax: 011/26.82.99 - Email: noel.veraverbeke@uhasselt.be

**VERBEKE Geert (Pr.)** Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Biostatistisch Centrum Capucijnenvoer, 35 B-3000 LEUVEN (BELGIUM); Tel: 016/33.68.91 - 016/33.68.92 - Fax: 016/33.69.00 - Email: geert.verbeke@med.kuleuven.be

**VERBOVEN Sabine (Mrs)** University of Antwerp Dept. of Mathematics, Statistics & Actuarial Sc. Prinsstraat, 13 B-2000 Antwerpen (BELGIUM); Tel: 03/220.42.19 - Fax: 03/220.48.17 - Email: sabine.verboven@ua.ac.be

**VERBRUGGEN Nadia (Mrs.)** Merck Sharp & Dohme CBARDS Clos du Lynx, 5 B-1200 BRUSSEL (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/776.65.24 - Fax: 02/776.62.96 - Email: nadia\_verbruggen@merck.com

**VERDONCK Tim (Mr)** Universiteit Antwerpen Middelheimlaan, 1 B-2020 ANTWERPEN (BELGIUM); Tel: 03/265.38.96 - Fax: 03/265.37.77 - Email: tim.verdonck@ua.ac.be

**VEREDAS David (Dr)** Université Libre de Bruxelles ECARES - CP114 Avenue FD Roosevelt, 50 B-1050 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/650.42.18 - Fax: 02/650.44.75 - Email: dveredas@ulb.ac.be

**VERLAAK Robert (Mr)** AON RE BELGIUM Van Neuenhuyselaan, 2 B-1160 BRUSSEL (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/675.05.06 - Fax: 02/672.67.06 - Email: robert\_verlaak@aon.be

**VERMANDELE Catherine (Pr)** Université Libre de Bruxelles LMTD CP 124 - Avenue Jeanne, 44 B-1050 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/650.46.55 - Fax: 02/650.34.66 - Email: vermande@ulb.ac.be

**VERMEIRE Lea (Pr)** Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Campus Kortrijk Sabbelaan, 53 B-8500 KORTRIJK (BELGIUM); Tel: 056-24.61.32 - 056-24.61.11 - Fax: 056-24.69.99 - Email: lea.vermeire@kuleuven-kortrijk.be

**VERMEULEN Bart (Mr)** Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Faculty of Economics and Applied Economics Naamsestraat, 69 B-3000 LEUVEN (BELGIUM); Tel: 016/32.68.98 - Fax: 016/32.67.32 - Email: bart.vermeulen@econ.kuleuven.be

**VERSTREKEN Liesbeth (Mrs)** UCB Pharma R&D R8 - Biostatistics Chemin du Foriest B-1420 BRAINE L'ALLEUD (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/386.31.86 - Fax: 02/386.30.44 - Email: liesbeth.verstreken@ucb-group.com

**VON FRENCKELL Rémy (Dr.)** EORTC Director Statistics, Data Management, IT, CT Oper. Avenue E. Mounierlaan, 83/11 B-1200 BRUSSEL (BELGIUM); Tel: 02/774.10.16 - Fax: 02/772.35.45 - Email: Remy.vonfrenckell@eortc.be

**VON SACHS Rainer (Pr)** UCL Institut de Statistique Voie du Roman Pays, 20 B-1348 LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE (BELGIUM); Tel: 010/47.88.06 - Fax: 010/47.30.32 - Email: rainer.vonsachs@uclouvain.be

**VRIJENS Bernard (Dr.)** Pharmionic systems Espace Entreprise de Visé Rue des Cyclistes Frontière, 24 B-4600 VISE (BELGIUM); Tel: +32 4 374 86 35 - Fax: +32 4 374 86 22 - Email: bernard.vrijens@pharmionic.com

**VRIJENS France (Mrs)** Centre Fédéral d'Expertise des Soins de Santé Rue de la Loi, 62 B-1040 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM); Tel: - Fax: - Email: fvrijens@all2all.org

**WAUTERS Magdalena (Pr)** op de dries, 4 B-3770 RIEMST (BELGIUM); Tel: 012/44.01.44 - Fax: 012/45.61.74 - Email: magda@vuylsteke.be

**WERKER Bas (Mr)** Finance group Tilburg University P.O. Box 90153 NL 5000 LE TILBURG (THE NETHERLANDS); Tel: - Fax: - Email: Werker@kub.nl

**WEVERBERGH Dany (Mr.)** MET D432 Cartographie et topographie Bd du Nord, 8 B-5000 NAMUR (BELGIUM); Tel: 081/77.33.85 - Fax: 081/77.38.88 - Email: dweverbergh@met.wallonie.be

**WILLEMS Gert (Mr)** Ghent University Dpt of Applied Mathematics and Comp. Sciences Krijgslaan 281 - S9 B-9000 GENT (BELGIUM); Tel: 09/264.47.56 - Fax: 09/264.49.95 - Email: gert.willems@ugent.be

**WOUTERS Heidi (Mrs)** Universiteit Gent Coupure links, 653 B-9000 GENT

(BELGIUM); Tel: 09/264.59.87 - Fax: 09/264.62.20 - Email: heidi.wouters@ugent.be  
**WOUTERS Kristien (Mrs)** University of Hasselt Universitaire Campus, Gebouw D  
B-3590 DIEPENBEEK (BELGIUM); Tel: 011/26.81.11 - Fax: 011/26.81.99 - Email:  
kristien.wouters@uhasselt.be

**WOUTERS Luc (Mr)** Barrier Therapeutics NV Cipalstraat 3 B-2440 GEEL  
(BELGIUM); Tel: 014/570.510 - Fax: 014/570.515 - Email:  
lwouters@barriertherapeutics.be

**YSEBAERT Maria (Pr.)** Axelwalle, 31 B-9700 OUDENAARDE (BELGIUM); Tel:  
- Fax: - Email: maria.ysebaert@skynet.be

**YU Jie (Mrs)** Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Faculty of Economics and Applied  
Economics Naamsestraat, 69 B-3000 LEUVEN (BELGIUM); Tel: 016/32.68.97 - Fax:  
016/32.67.32 - Email: Jie.yu@econ.kuleuven.be

**ZAHAF Toufik (Mr)** Glaxo SmithKline Bio rue de l'Institut, 89 B-1330 RIXENSART  
(BELGIUM); Tel: 02/656.92.56 - Fax: 02/656.80.33 - Email: zahaf.toufik@gskbio.com

**ZHANG Lixin (Mrs)** Université de Liège Biostatistique CHU, Sart Tilman, B23 B-  
4000 LIEGE (BELGIQUE); Tel: 04/366.25.95 - Fax: 04/366.25.96 - Email:  
Lixin.zhang@ulg.ac.be

We would like to publish in this *Newsletter* any statistical matter such as :

- information about universities, institutes (1 to 3 pages);
- lists of recent publications and technical reports;
- abstracts of recent PhD theses;
- news of members;
- forthcoming statistical events and announcements;
- short papers about teaching methods in statistics, statistics in the industry, official statistics, etc.

Suggestions are welcome: please, contact us.

Suitable information for the next issue, prepared as **(LA)TEX** or **WORD FILES**, should reach the editors of the Newsletter **BEFORE March 15, 2008**, preferable by e-mail to:

sophie.vanbelle@ulg.ac.be  
olivier.thas@ugent.be

### **Any change of job, address, phone number, ... ?**

Please notify the Secretary of the Society:

Gentiane Haesbroeck:  
Université de Liège  
Institut de mathématique  
Sart Tilman B37  
B-4000 Liège  
g.haesbroeck@ulg.ac.be