

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 15th annual meeting of the Belgian Statistical Society was officially closed, and the 16th meeting, to be organized by the Facultés Universitaires Notre-Dame de la Paix Namur, was announced. The 16th 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