

LIVERPOOL SHORT COURSE ON MEDICAL STATISTICS

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HAVING JUST GONE THROUGH the not very pleasant last couple of months before my Part I vivas (although I did come out in the end with flying colours), I had realised that perhaps statistics is not my strongest point, especially when it came to showing evidence in my physiological measurements portfolio that I had successfully utilised statistical tests in the analysis of some data. In addition, I had ended up with a lot of very confusing data at the end of my MSc project on the use of artificial neural networks for the analysis of EEG signals (brain electrical activities) to detect patterns of drowsiness. I did not have a clue as to what would be the right statistical approach to analysing those sets of data. This was when I came across the advertisement for the Medical Statistics course, hosted at the Royal Liverpool University Hospital in May 2011. The course was organised by the Department of Medical Physics and Clinical Engineering at the Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospital Trust and the University of Liverpool. It did not take much effort to secure the funding for the course as my managers knew the course met the IPeM and HPC CPD scheme standards and could be very useful for a trainee aspiring to gain the right scientific skills required from a clinical scientist, not to mention that they were also quite happy with my latest achievement of passing the Part I vivas with merit.

ORGANISATION AND TOPICS COVERED ON THE COURSE

The course was run by **Azzam Taktak** and **Antonio Eleuteri** (Royal Liverpool University Hospital). It was arranged over two days: a refresher course on day 1 and an intermediate course on day 2. The range of subjects

covered during the course included hypothesis testing, analysis of variance, ROC analysis, correlation and regression, survival analysis and clinical decision making.

LOOKED AFTER WELL

Despite being a fast-paced course due to the volume of subjects covered in 2 days, it was very well planned and the audience could keep up with the flow of presentations due to the coherence of the contents and the exercises at the end of each section. We were also very well looked after in terms of refreshments and the very delicious meals served for lunch. It was my first time eating Scouse, a traditional dish from Liverpool, and I quite enjoyed it.

EXPERT KNOWLEDGE

Antonio and Azzam were both very knowledgeable on their subjects and very helpful with the questions asked by the attendees. We were even encouraged to forward to them in advance any specific statistics problems to be discussed during the course. I sent them my MSc project results and I got a very comprehensive and helpful response as to how I should analyse the results. I have written a paper on the results of my study that has been submitted to the journal *Medical Engineering and Physics*. I enjoyed my stay in Liverpool and the course was very useful and informative. I strongly encourage any Part I and II trainees to attend the course – it will provide them with a shortcut to broaden their understanding and knowledge on statistical methods and tools required for scientific approaches to problems. It is also a good way of showing evidence for having acquired some of the competencies required for applicants to attain registration as clinical scientists. ■