

VASA breakfast meeting Friday Feb 18, 2011
VA HSR&D Annual Meeting, National Harbor, MD
SL/RAS

Pre-meeting discussion:

Before the actual meeting was called to order, there was discussion on the issue of computers being leased and how the “standardized” computer setup might be adequate for a writer or clinician, but not for a statistician. There also were problems with data user agreements for non-VA researchers. Concern was expressed as to whether VINCI was to become the data and software repository and that it might not be adequate.

General information:

Andrew Zhou started the meeting by reviewing how VASA started and citing the VASA s website (www.hsr.d.research.va.gov/for_researchers/sig/vasa). The visibility of statistical methodology at the HSR&D meeting has increased. This year, there were methods workshops on Wednesday and Thursday and a methods session on Friday. Seth Eisen and others at Central Office have been very supportive. VASA now has 115 members – contact Whitney Showalter (whitney.showalter@va.gov) to be added to the VASA e-mail list.

9th International Conference on Health Policy Statistics:

The 9th International Conference on Health Policy Statistics 2011 (www.amstat.org/meetings/ichps/2011/) will be held in Cleveland, OH, October 5-7. Andrew Zhou and Roslyn Stone are on the planning committee. A member of the VASA Program Committee, Maren Olsen (Durham VA), has organized an invited session on “Analytic Challenges in Complex Longitudinal Data from VA-related Health Services Research”. Central Office has supported this meeting in the past, and we hope that they will be able to do so again this year; some VA support has been requested. The presence of a VA session on the invited program might make it easier for VA statisticians to justify funding to attend the conference.

2012 HSR&D:

The 2012 HSR&D meeting is being organized by the Durham VA, and Maren Olson is on the planning committee. The formal program will continue to have workshops and methods sessions. Andrew suggested a format by which a clinician and a researcher are brought together, given a problem, and develop an approach to solve it, perhaps in a workshop format aimed at clinical researchers and statisticians. Another suggestion was that statisticians have a formal opportunity to talk each other about issues and methods, perhaps via a round table discussion, a meeting at a restaurant, or a “happy hour”.

Updates from Central Office by Merry Ward:

Merry emphasized that statisticians need to get involved in text mining (natural language processing, or NLP). Vinci is amassing text. Statisticians need to get involved with machine learning, to fully exploit the richness of CPRS / EMR to address such questions as the effectiveness of alternative treatments. Vinci has SAS / STATA and is planning to be a library for statistical algorithms. In addition, HSR&D funding is becoming tighter, so statisticians need to make ourselves essential. Angelique made a comment that OIT connections also are needed.

Madeline McCarren (PBM, VAMedSAFE) raised an issue regarding authorship and recognition of statistical contributions to medical research. Merry Ward encouraged Madeline to do a poster or a paper on statisticians’ role in research, or possibly organize a session, at the 2012 meeting. Merry asked how many of those present had submitted grants as PIs: Roslyn Stone, Andrew Zhou and Donald Miller. Discussion followed on how statisticians need to be included on grants and papers in authorship capacities. One person observed a situation where the statistician was dropped after the grant was funded.

Upcoming Joint Statistical Meetings (JSM):

It is too late to organize a VA session for the 2011 JSM in Miami Beach in August. However, if there is interest, VASA could organize an informal get-together. A small sub-committee is needed to develop an invited session proposal for the 2012 JSM (proposal deadline is early fall 2011).