Review of: A Practical Approach to Analyzing Healthcare Data

Authors: Kuehn, L.
American Health Information Management Association. Chicago, IL. 175 pages at $59.95 per copy

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Purpose
The central theme of this book relates to obtaining, managing, organizing, and analyzing data. This text may be appropriate for allied health professionals who are not necessarily statisticians; however, it is clearly intended for Health Information Management faculty, students, and professionals. This book is arranged into four parts and includes 11 chapters. The author provides tables and graphs throughout the sections to illustrate concepts and provide examples, and each chapter concludes with review exercises for assessing the reader's understanding of the information presented.

Strategies
A Practical Approach to Analyzing Healthcare Data provides an understanding of basic data analysis concepts, including locations of healthcare data for comparison purposes. It gives a basic, Health Information Management (HIM) focused synopsis of statistics that is meant to orient the student, faculty, or professional to the subject rather than outlining a full course in statistics. There are hands-on tools that relate to analyzing inpatient data, hospital outpatient data, and physician data. Real-life data and problem-solving techniques are at the heart of this book. This book serves as a guide for those who may be unfamiliar with statistical techniques and for statisticians who may be unfamiliar with how coded and classification data are arranged and interpreted; this book gives a general overview that integrates both.

Organization of Resources
The authors use an entry-level comprehension base because readers are expected to have a basic understanding of statistics, Microsoft Excel®, and use of common statistical formulae. This book also assumes that the reader has knowledge of the International Classification of Diseases, 9th Edition, Clinical Modification (ICD-9-CM) and Healthcare Common Procedural Coding System (HCPCS)/Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) coding systems and how they are applied in acute and ambulatory settings. The text is useful and includes many real-life data applications and examples for readers to gain a better understanding by a hands-on approach. Part I is comprised of 3 chapters and provides general information in data analysis, healthcare data and organizing, analyzing and presenting data. Part II focuses on quantitative data analysis in healthcare, including descriptive and inferential statistics. Part III outlines qualitative analysis of healthcare data and provides methods for sampling data and obtaining data from different sources. Internet resources that are available to the public are encouraged for practice using live data. Part IV lists various ways to benchmark data and analyze data from external, rather than internal, sources. Each of the four divisions provides a more detailed breakdown of the information listed for each chapter.

Summary and Recommendations
Overall, the quality of information and resources in the book are well written, organized, and easy to follow. It is a book for students, faculty, and professionals alike that bridges the gap between statisticians who may not have a full understanding of clinical coding and allied health professionals, especially in HIM, who are not true statisticians. There are end-of-chapter exercises provided, with answers, to check a reader's understanding as concepts are introduced and explained. The eight appendices include a glossary, process examples, data analyst's job descriptions for career options, and a list of web sites to use for practice. A CD-ROM is neatly packaged as an insert with valuable data analysis tools and references. It would have been helpful to include color charts and graphs in the book as opposed to the printed gray-scale, given the nature of reading and deciphering complex multilevel data. Also, an interactive CD may be more appropriate for use with this type of book.