

# THE CAMBRIDGE STATISTICS DISCUSSION GROUP

**Monday 4th October 1999 7:15 for 7:45**

Hopkinson Room,  
University of Cambridge Computer Laboratory,  
Pembroke Street, Cambridge

## **Ethics and Practice of Modern Clinical Trial Designs**

**Chris Palmer**

Department of Community Medicine,  
University of Cambridge Institute of Public Health

**Abstract:** Last year duly celebrated 50 years since the publication of the first randomised controlled trial. Methodological research by ethically-motivated biostatisticians into alternative designs to the traditional framework dates back just as far, yet practical examples of such modern, data-dependent designs remain extremely rare. In this (equation-free!) talk, reasons for their limited application are discussed, along with suggestions for why, when and how they might be more commonly invoked. It seems more than just a pity that, as we enter the new millenium, traditional methods intended for agricultural studies and first applied in the 1920's, should still dominate today's clinical trials.

**Speaker:** Chris Palmer's statistical career has evolved from the mathematical to the applied end of the spectrum. After reading maths at Oxford, his PhD was in Mathematical Statistics at the University of North Carolina, USA with dissertation on an ethical clinical trials design. As post-doc at Harvard's Biostatistics Department, he encountered real clinical trials. His research continued while a lecturer at Reading University's Department of Applied Statistics. The last eight years have been in Cambridge University's Department of Community Medicine. In 1996, he founded the Centre for Applied Medical Statistics (CAMS), a small group of medical statisticians undertaking consulting, collaborating and offering courses for clinical researchers. He is currently European Office Acting Editor for Statistics in Medicine.

Annual General Meeting: Chris's talk will be preceded by a brief Annual General Meeting.

**Directions:** Enter the New Museums site through the arch from Pembroke Street. Turn to the left in front of the building with the brown iron staircase and pass through the passage way by the tree. Enter the lobby which is straight in front of you and find the back entrance to the Computing Service on your left. When inside follow the signs. It is not possible to park on the New Museums site in the evening. The back entrance to the Computing Service will be locked at 7:45.

**Next Meetings:**

25th November – Richard Wiseman on 'Investigating the Paranormal' (University of Herts).

4th May – Jennifer Potts (Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit).

**Supper:** Some members eat regularly in the University Centre before each meeting at 6-15. Feel free to join them.

**Secretary:** Peter Watson, MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit, 15 Chaucer Road, Cambridge CB2 2EF;  
telephone 01223 355294 Extension 380; E-mail [peter.watson@mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk](mailto:peter.watson@mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk)

**TURN OVER for the Annual General Meeting agenda**

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## **Annual General Meeting**

The annual general meeting will be followed immediately by Chris Palmer's talk 'Ethics and Practice of Modern Clinical Trial Designs'.

### **Agenda:**

0. Approval of Minutes of previous A.G.M.
1. Treasurer's Report.
2. Secretary's Report.
3. Election of Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, plus 3 other members of the Committee.
4. Any Other Business.

### **Rules for Election:**

1. FRANCISE: All paid-up members may vote or stand for office.
2. NOMINATIONS: The offices to be filled are Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer and three other members of the Committee.

An outgoing Chairman will be a member of the Committee ex officio. At the end of each year the entire Committee will stand down, but may stand again for the same office as they are leaving without nomination. To be elected to a different office a candidate must be nominated by one person from the paid-up membership, not including himself. Nominations do not require a seconder to be valid, but do require the consent of the nominee. One person can be nominated for more than one office, but hold only one. If a person is elected to a higher office (according to the ordering given below) he or she automatically ceases to be a candidate for a lower office. A candidate for the post of Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer is automatically a candidate for the Committee if he or she fails to gain election to one of these three posts.

**TURN OVER for the directions to the Hopkinson Room and the abstract of Chris's talk**