



BIOSTATISTICS SEMINARS

All seminars are held from 4PM – 5PM
485 Lexington Ave, Conference Room B (2137)

- ❖ May 17, 2017 [Sean Devlin](#)
MSK
- ❖ May 24, 2017 [Irina Ostrovnya](#)
MSK
- ❖ May 31, 2017 [Hemant Ishwaran](#)
University of Miami
- ❖ June 7, 2017 [Andy Ni](#)
MSK
- ❖ June 14, 2017 [Marinela Capanu](#)
MSK
- ❖ June 21, 2017 [Jaya Satagopan](#)
MSK



DEPARTMENT CHAIR
Colin Begg, PhD
EDITORS
Sharon Bayuga, MPH
Prusha Patel, MPH
Narre Heon
Lauren Rogak, MA
Mary Shaw
Amethyst Saldia
Shireen Lewis, MPA
Joseph Kanik

STAFF PROMOTIONS

- ❖ [Sergio Corrales Guerrero](#) promoted to Senior Research Technician
- ❖ [Vikram Mavinkurve](#) promoted to Research Assistant
- ❖ [Amy Tin](#) promoted to Assistant Research Biostatistician
- ❖ [Prusha Patel](#) promoted to Senior Research Project Coordinator
- ❖ [Stacey Petruzella](#) promoted to Senior Research Project Coordinator
- ❖ [Zhenlan Wang](#) promoted to Research Study Assistant II

RESTAURANT RECOMMENDATIONS

EATSA: a fun (unnerving) automated fast food chain where you order food on tablets and pick up from a wall of cubbies with led screen doors. Customizable quinoa and salad bowls for humans, by robots, at a low price. I, for one, welcome our new robot overlords... 666 3rd ave at the corner of 43rd st

ANDO: restaurateur David Chang's delivery-only food service. Download the app and browse a variety of options that include sandwiches, fried chicken, salads, and momofuku desserts. Sign up at <http://b.andofood.com/rft5> and take \$10 off with code narre-heon-rft5 or sign up at this link for a free cheesesteak: b.andofood.com/gift/nh110-cheesesteak

DANIEL SJOBERG WINS PLATINUM AWARD

[Daniel Sjoberg](#) is this year's recipient of The Platinum Award which was presented to him in London at the European Association of Urology meeting. The award acknowledges his expertise and outstanding contributions to urology's highest quality journal as an editor, author, and reviewer.



Daniel Sjoberg, MS

GRANTS

[Irene Orlow](#), [Ronglai Shen](#), and [Colin Begg](#) were awarded a P01 Intermed Grant for their project: "Integration of Clinical and Molecular Biomarkers for Melanoma Survival."

This project will evaluate mutation, methylation, and expression profiles and then integrate the results obtained with multiple platforms in a large cohort of melanoma patients diagnosed at AJCC TNM stages IIA/IIB/IIC/IIIA/IIIB. This project will contribute to the current knowledge of the underlying biology of melanoma progression and help identify at diagnosis those patients who will have poor survival and might benefit from adjuvant therapies.

The overall P01 PIs are Marianne Berwick (University of New Mexico) and Nancy Thomas (University of North Carolina). Ronglai Shen (Biostatistics Service) is PI of the project "Multiplatform analysis on melanoma molecular subtypes and patient survival outcome." Irene Orlow (Epidemiology Service) will co-lead the Biospecimens Core with Klaus Busam (Pathology).

PUBLICATIONS

[Ethan Basch](#), [Lauren Rogak](#), and their colleagues at the Alliance for Clinical Trials in Oncology have co-authored a manuscript, "[Feasibility Assessment of Patient Reporting of Symptomatic Adverse Events in Multicenter Cancer Clinical Trials](#)," in JAMA Oncology. This is the first prospective study that assessed patient self-reporting of symptomatic adverse events in cancer multicenter clinical trials. 285 patients enrolled in one of nine clinical trials across the United States consented to this study, and were asked to report 13 common symptomatic adverse events in clinic on tablet computers. 93.9% of these patients completed all surveys at all time points. Overall it was found that most patients are willing and able to self-report during trial participation, and patient reporting picked up toxicities that investigators missed in documentation.

[Ethan Basch](#), [Thomas Atkinson](#), [Yuelin Li](#), [Lauren Rogak](#) and their colleagues have co-authored a manuscript, "[Evaluation of different recall periods for the US National Cancer Institute's PRO-CTCAE](#)," in Clinical Trials. In this paper, the authors report the results of their study, comparing the impact of various length of recall periods in patient reports of adverse events. Specifically, this paper is focused on the appropriate recall period for the Patient Reported Outcomes – Common Terminology Criteria for Adverse Events (PRO-CTCAE). The authors found that in trials employing PROs, it may not be feasible to administer questionnaires frequently due to study logistics. Therefore, it may be of interest to space out questionnaires to correspond with return visits, e.g., every 3-4 weeks. This study concludes that there is some loss of information with progressively longer recall periods (1,2,3, and 4 weeks – with daily as a reference standard), but longer recall is still acceptable when necessary in trials.

[Alexia Iasonos](#) recently edited a **Handbook of Methods for Designing, Monitoring, and Analyzing Dose-Finding Trials**, which gives a presentation of methods for early phase clinical trials. The methodology of early clinical trials has advanced greatly over the last 20 years. Statistical inference is difficult since standard techniques do not usually apply and parameter estimation is challenging due to the small sample size. Bayesian methods play an important part in overcoming these difficulties, but nonetheless, require special consideration. The purpose of this handbook is to provide an expanded summary of the field as it stands and also, through discussion, provide insights into the thinking of leaders in the field as to the potential developments of the years ahead.

NEW STAFF

Jessica Lavery, Assistant Research Biostatistician

Jessica has joined the Health Outcomes Research Group as an Assistant Research Biostatistician. She graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2014 with a master's degree in Biostatistics, and has previously worked as a biostatistician at Columbia University Medical Center and NYU's Hospital for Joint Diseases. She will be working with [Elena Elkin](#), [Allison Snyderman](#) and other investigators on health outcomes studies using SEER-Medicare and other large datasets.



Sarah Ward, Visiting Investigator

Sarah Ward has joined the department as a Visiting Investigator from the University of Western Australia. She recently received a four-year Australian National Health and Medical Research Council Fellowship and will be conducting the first two years of this award at MSK. Sarah will be working with [Colin Begg](#) on a number of projects related to the genetic epidemiology of melanoma, primarily focusing on determinants of poor survival.



Andrea Knezevic, Assistant Research Biostatistician

Andrea comes to MSK from Emory University Department of Biostatistics & Bioinformatics, where she worked in collaborative research with investigators from various clinical specialties, including infectious diseases, pediatrics and cardiology. Andrea has experience in phase II clinical trials, retrospective and prospective observational studies, and analytical expertise in survival analysis and explanatory and predictive model building.



Paolo Capogrosso, Research Fellow

Paolo Capogrosso has joined the department as a research fellow working with Andrew Vickers on uro-oncology projects for 1 year. He completed the medical school at University Vita-Salute San Raffaele (Milan, Italy) and is currently chief resident in urology at San Raffaele Institute.

STAFF ACHIEVEMENTS

[Ann Zauber](#), along with Christine Iacobuzio-Donahue and Michelle Johnson, took part in a panel discussion on March 1st titled MSK's "not so" Hidden Figures: A Panel Discussion with MSK Women Scientist and Administrators. The event celebrated Black History and Women's History months as the panelists discussed their own experiences as women developing a career in science. They shared similarities with the lead characters from the movie Hidden Figures, and highlighted the importance of having mentors, never giving up, and learning to balance being mothers with the demands of their careers.

If you were unable to attend, the video is on: [MSK Video Central: http://svidpsns210en1.mskcc.org/p.jsp?i=2130](http://svidpsns210en1.mskcc.org/p.jsp?i=2130)



[Annie Yang](#) ran with 105 other Fred's Team members in the United Airlines NYC Half-Marathon on March 19th. Together, Fred's Team raised more than \$330,000 for cancer research at MSK. An enormous thank you to everyone in the department who donated!



[Renee Gennarelli](#) was chosen to be one of 50 members of the spring 2017 NASA Datanauts program. Datanauts use NASA open data and tools to help NASA evolve processes and solve real-world problems while enhancing their own data science skills through monthly data challenges and online seminars with NASA scientists. The main goal of the program is to create a vibrant problem-solving community with data scientists from varying backgrounds and expertise levels. Renee traveled to Washington, D.C., in February, to meet her fellow Datanauts and begin her specific project.

Kudos to our own [Sami Noor](#)! The LGBT Pride ERN (Employee Resource Network) monthly newsletter featured an interview with Sami discussing his recent trip to Greece where he volunteered at the Frakapor Refugee Camp. You can read more about his experience here: <https://tinyurl.com/SamiNoor>

AMERICAN EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SOCIETY

[Dr. Jonine Bernstein](#) hosted the 90th Annual Meeting of the American Epidemiological Society from March 23rd to March 24th. The conference took place at Weill Cornell's Belfer Research Building with an evening banquet held at MSK/RRL. Close to 100 senior epidemiologists from across the country attended the conference. [Cynthia Berry](#) led the planning and logistics of the meeting, with the assistance of [Sami Noor](#), [Shireen Lewis](#), [Tricia Neary](#), and [Tania Celea](#) were also at the event to provide on-site support. The team worked with organizers from AES from the beginning planning stages which resulted in the successful execution of the conference.

CYCLE FOR SURVIVAL

Our department participated in its 2nd Cycle for Survival. The Ep-Bio Cyclers (Cynthia Berry, Andy Briggs, Katherine Cheung, Brad Cohen, Zach Helms, Shireen Lewis, Vinnie Madonia, Ethna McFerran, Kay See Tan, Ranjit Suku) rode on Saturday, March 11th to support rare cancer research at MSK. This year the team fundraised close to \$6,800. Thank you to everyone who participated on the team and those who donated to this important cause. We look forward to next year's event!

SNOW STORM STELLA: VOLUNTEERING DURING A CRISIS

March 14, 2017 – the morning begins with an alarm going off and it is quickly silenced. Wind howls outside the window, coupled with the faint sound of shovels scraping the pavement and an even fainter sound of complaints muttered under the breath of the shoveler. But these sounds, they don't matter. The apartment is warm, both thanks in part to the super turning on the heat in the nick of time and due to a serene lack of urgency. That comforting and warm feeling - there is no need to rush and get up, no need to open the door, no need to even put on pants – it's a snow day. But outside of this bubble of an apartment, where work is done from home, the world moves on outside. We forget sometimes, working for a hospital yet working away from the hospital, that we work for a hospital. And hospitals have patients and these patients are attended to regardless of the amount of snow the city sees. We all get the e-mail: Sloan-Kettering seeks employees to volunteer and assist at helping main campus function appropriately. Though who among us dare answer the call? Who would be willing to endure the elements and perform tasks they normally do not, all for the sake of helping out this institution? On March 14 the Epi-Bio group had two of its own step up. Research Study Assistant, [Molly Samson](#) and Research Project Manager, [Nicole Benfante](#), both volunteered.



Molly Samson

Joey Kanik: What were your first thoughts when you found out about the snow storm?

Nicole Benfante: Great! I can work from home today and not come into the office.

Molly Samson: How am I going to get to Manhattan from Queens? I take an above ground train.

JK: What inspired you to volunteer? Was it an e-mail asking for help that you received or did someone reach out to you?

NB: My manager in urology reached out to any senior staff who was thinking of coming in and asked us to let her know when we got there. I e-mailed letting her know I was in and she said great, you're probably going to be selected to volunteer. And that's how it all started!

MS: I had a different encounter. A few days or weeks prior I filled out a form letting the hospital know that I would be okay to volunteer for whatever reason and then I got an e-mail that morning saying that I had been rerouted to emergency management. And we actually both got the e-mail at the same time while sitting next to each other at Kimmel.

NB: I think we were the luck of the draw because other RSAs came in after us and they were told they don't need anybody else. I guess we were the last two selected!

MS: Probably because we got there early!

JK: Was this your first time volunteering?

MS: Yup!

NB: Yes.

JK: How was your commute?

MS: I usually take the W train but on the day of the snowstorm I took the M and it was the easiest commute of my life. There was no one on the train.

NB: I've come in before during snowstorms, including one time where all the trains were shutdown, so I've done a 30 block walk from my apartment. Luckily the Q train just opened up right by my apartment so I took that and I probably got to work quicker than ever before.

JK: What was the weather like on your way to main campus? How long did it take to get there?

NB: The commute was easy but the walk just from Kimmel to Main Campus was horrible. At that point it was hailing.

MS: And the wind!

NB: It was not a nice walk over. Kudos to all the patients who came in.

JK: How are jobs decided for volunteers? Are they given out randomly? Drawn from a hat? Hunger Games style?

NB: I think they first look for people to be patient volunteers, I know some people who have done that in the past, where you don't do anything clinically relevant but you just sit with patients and make sure they're okay. But when we walked over, those roles had already been filled and so they told us that we were going over to the cafeteria.

JK: The cafeteria kitchen – how was it?

MS: It's incredible.

JK: Any secrets you uncovered?!

MS: The greatest discovery for me was...

NB: I know what you're going to say!

MS: I met...the cookie lady.

JK: There's a designated cookie lady?

MS: Oh yeah. All the cookies that are made for SOAR seminar, new employee orientation, any meetings...I met the lady who makes them. I met her at 9am and she was really nice. I told her of her fame and she gave me cookies.

NB: I had no idea how many cooking tools there actually are. There was a machine that chops cucumbers down. Luckily I didn't have to use any of that; they had someone trained to do that. But I was amazed. There were a lot of tools and a lot of people in the cafeteria. Even for a day where a lot of people called out.

MS: I was amazed by how much preparation there is. Even for just the salad bar. A lot of washing, cutting, slicing and dicing.

NB: There's a lot of food.

JK: So you were part of the whole food process?

MS: We started off in the back but when it came to lunch time we made it to the front.

JK: So which do you prefer? Preparing or serving the food?

NB: I was not prepared that day to be serving food. I was wearing my work clothes. I had a sweater and snow boots on and I was not prepared to be standing behind hot boiling water. I definitely preferred the back to serving.

MS: I thought it was a thrill out front. It was a quick moving machine and we had a system.

JK: Were you taught the system?

MS: Oh no, it was learning on the fly. And on that day everyone ate for free so of course there was a line down the hallway. So there was a high demand for quick service. But it was fun - talking and interacting with people. Very active, and people were grateful.

JK: Any trouble during the serving?

NB: They opened the line at 10:30 and we were there until 2. During that time there was no break in the line so as you can imagine, we ran out of some items. Some people were not pleased when they discovered we ran out of gravy to go with their mashed potatoes.

JK: Can't have mashed potatoes without gravy!

MS: I think people were disappointed to wait in line only to find out we were out of the item they were waiting for. But at the same time they were understanding.

NB: They were pretty good at restocking items. They would run out of chicken parm and just have baked chicken at the ready. They seemed very prepared for feeding the masses.



Nicole Benfante

JK: Any quirky food orders or requests?

NB: I have a standard idea of what foods should be combined together. I love meat and potatoes but I'm not sure I would want chicken parm, spaghetti...and then mashed potatoes. Covered in vegetable based gravy. I think because it was free people just wanted some of everything.

MS: People kept asking questions in regards to their dietary restrictions like – is this gravy gluten-free or vegan?

NB: I sided with telling people no, safer to not eat it. There wasn't much instruction.

JK: So was this your first time working in a kitchen setting?

NB: Yes.

MS: When I was younger, every Tuesday before thanksgiving I worked in a soup kitchen so I had a similar quick paced experience, though that was a long time ago.

JK: Did working in the kitchen inspire you to cook more or affect your appetite in any way?

NB: I didn't want chicken for days.

MS: The sweater that I wore...I've washed it three times and it still smells like chicken. So I don't think that will be a work sweater anymore.

NB: I really like cooking but it was interesting to be on the serving end. My serving is usually to a max of ten, and it's all family.

JK: So what would you say the entire experience taught you?

NB: A new appreciation for the people that work in the kitchen. There's so much that goes into the prep that I didn't realize. Whenever I go to the cafeteria I get a sandwich or oatmeal but what goes into all the food, all the prep, it's crazy and they work so hard.

MS: I have a huge gratitude for the people who stand there all day, serving people food, even still with a smile. By the end of it we were kind of grouchy so now, as a customer, I try to be super nice because I've been in that position.

JK: Do you think you would volunteer again?

NB: I might let somebody else, you know, take it for a ride and experience it. We actually spoke to some people in the Neurology group about our time volunteering and they said they would have loved to do that. So I think we sold some people on volunteering next emergency.

MS: I would do it again but not necessarily commuting from Queens because getting out of the city was tricky. It took about three hours to get back home. But overall, yeah!

JK: Would you recommend others to volunteer?

NB: I think so. Once you start working in the hospital you don't usually get an opportunity to see things that are widely outside of what you do. It's definitely an experience worth checking out.

MS: That was something I thought was really cool about new employee orientation, you're with people from all over the hospital. I've been able to maintain that relationship with some of those people, I'll see them at main campus and remember that they were in orientation. But you really do get stuck in your role and department and it's good to be able to see outside and how much goes into making the hospital run.

JK: Any advice you could give to anyone interested in volunteering?

MS: Wear layers.

NB: Bring a change of clothes; you never know where you'll end up!

MS: Just be flexible.

NB: And enthusiastic!



If you're interested in volunteering during the next snow storm, the HICS Labor Pool Command Center generally sends out the following link the day before an anticipated crisis.

<https://www.mskcc.org/hics-staff-redeployment-survey>