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Comment

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Psychiatry may be unique among the medical disciplines in the breadth of its scientific collaboration. Research in psychiatry includes components from the biological, medical, behavioral, physical, and social sciences. Their mixture provides an ideal working environment for a statistician with interests in diverse application experiences. Brian Everitt is one of the best known and highly respected statisticians with application interests in psychiatry. His collaboration with Michael Rutter, for example, has led to significant extensions of understanding in child psychiatry.

Everitt is to be commended for providing enlightening and entertaining insight into the role of statisticians in psychiatric research. He has accurately described some of the more rewarding aspects (collab-

oration on interesting scientific problems) and some of the more frustrating aspects (unwillingness to seek and accept statistical advice). I have had similar experience to Everitt's in reading and contributing to the psychiatric literature. First, I find that there tends to be an obsession with p values and other mechanistic approaches to data interpretation. Second, I share the concern over more-or-less blind use of packaged programs by naive users. It is, I believe, unfair to accuse the psychiatrists I know of making these errors, but the correct blame may lie with those who provide support which should be supplied by statisticians. Most psychiatrists are quite eager to seek and accept expert opinion from statisticians.

Everitt has illustrated applications of Cox regression in his two examples. These examples are illustrative but by no means exhaustive. Statisticians are useful in virtually all aspects of psychiatric research. Let me consider a few additional examples, all of which involve substantial contributions by and from statisticians.

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