Preface

Special Issue in Honour of Stan Azen:
a Birthday Celebration

This special issue of Computational Statistics and Data Analysis (CSDA) is dedicated to Dr. Stanley Azen, founding Editor and continuing Editor-in-Chief of CSDA for the past 20 years. The Special Issue consists of peer review papers from the Editorial Board members of CSDA.

Dr. Azen has made innumerable contributions to biomedical research during his career as a researcher and educator. As a devoted and caring human being he also has fostered the careers of hundreds of young investigators, encouraging and enlightening them with his intelligence, compassion, and enduring sense of humor.

As a researcher, Dr. Azen has been a key investigator (Principal or Co-Principal) in over 50 grants, funded by the National Institutes of Health or by the private sector. His research areas have encompassed clinical trials to investigate new therapies and preventions in cardiovascular disease, diabetes, ophthalmology, stroke, and AIDS; epidemiological studies to determine the causes and risk factors in cardiovascular disease, ocular disease, diabetes, and hypertension; and methodological research in biostatistics, neural networks, and biomedical informatics. Not only has Dr. Azen contributed to the design, implementation, and analysis of these research studies, but he also is an extraordinary and prolific author, having published over 220 papers in major medical and biostatistical journals throughout his career.

As an exceptional and gifted educator, Dr. Azen was the “founding father” of the Masters and Doctoral training programs in biostatistics and epidemiology at the University of Southern California (USC) Keck School of Medicine. These training programs have grown from 4 graduate students in the first year, to over 200 graduate students per year in 2003. His most recent accomplishment was the establishment in 2003 of two new innovative training programs in molecular epidemiology and statistical genetics. Dr. Azen has personally mentored and trained hundreds of graduate and medical students, creating generations of new researchers who have gone on to become faculty members, clinical investigators, and research directors, making their own contributions to advancing biomedical research. For his articulate, inspiring, and engagingly humorous teaching style, in 1998 Dr. Azen was awarded the prestigious USC Associates Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Dr. Azen’s interest in the computational aspects of statistical methods date back to his contributions to the ground-breaking textbook Statistical Analysis: A Computer-Oriented Approach, co-authored in 1972 with Dr. A.A. Afifi. Dr. Azen’s latest contribution to the world of biomedical research is through the interfacing of biomedical informatics...
with biostatistics, fostering the continuum of intellectual and research activities for the retrieval, classification, management, and ultimate analysis of biological data in the quest for new knowledge. He has been a pioneer in this arena, having worked on the “Arpanet” as the forerunner of the Internet, and having implemented one of the earliest PC-based networked data systems for a national study of blood transfusions at the beginning of the AIDS epidemic. Dr. Azen has developed a new training and research track in biomedical informatics that will unify research programs across the continuum from biostatistics through research informatics. Most recently he has planned and overseen the creation of database systems to capture data and provide decision support for longitudinal studies in prevalence and risk factors of disease.

Dr. Azen’s exceptional talents are not confined to the scientific realm, as he also is an accomplished composer and professional pianist who entertains family, friends, students, and diners during his evening jobs at several restaurants in his hometown of Pasadena, and at the receptions of scientific meetings worldwide. His artistic and research careers further converged recently when his first CD, titled “Regressive Moments” in a fusion of statistical and musical concepts, was selected by a French pharmaceutical firm to be used as soothing music therapy for cancer chemotherapy patients.

Dr. Azen’s numerous contributions have been recognized internationally. He has been elected to be a Fellow of the American Statistical Association, Member of the International Statistical Institute, and President of the International Association for Statistical Computing (IASC). He was the founder of CSDA, which published its first volume of four issues in 1983. In 1991 the IASC chose CSDA as its official journal. Currently CSDA is a leading international journal with an increasing impact factor and number of submissions. Through the dedication of Dr. Azen, CSDA continues to expand its international influence as the main medium for publishing research and applications in the areas of computational statistics and data analysis.

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