

# Exploiting Existing Data For Health Research

International Conference, 17-19 September 2009  
Training Workshop, 12-16 September 2009  
University of St Andrews



## International Conference

In 2007 we hosted the first 'Exploiting Existing Data for Health Research' conference at the University of St Andrews. Designed for researchers and practitioners interested in record linkage and the use of routine health data in their research, this three-day conference attracted over 70 papers and 120 participants from across the world including New Zealand, Australia, the United States, Canada, and many countries in Europe. Following funding from the Wellcome Trust, through the Scottish Health Informatics Programme (SHIP), we are pleased that this will become a biennial event. This 3-day inter-disciplinary conference will gather together an international group of researchers who have expertise in the linkage and use of administrative or routine data for health research or health care improvement. Among others it will appeal to health researchers, including public health professionals, policy analysts, health planners, and those working in health technology assessment, as well as those working in health-related disciplines, such as health economics, population scientists and demographers.

We invite abstracts to be submitted by Monday 1st June 2009 on one of five themes:

**1. The value of record linkage in health research**

The use of linked data is commonplace in health research. This theme will include papers based on one-off and general-purpose studies which demonstrate the range of research benefits that result from record linkage.

**2. Record linkage for health care improvement**

Linked datasets are also vital to the improvement of health care services. This theme will include papers covering a range of themes including linkage to support health surveillance, health needs assessment, patient safety and quality improvement activities, performance assessment and accountability.

**3. Longitudinal record linkage**

Of particular research value are longitudinal studies which track information about individuals or organisations through time, providing the opportunity to examine how different characteristics influence one another sequentially. This session will include papers that address the particular strengths of longitudinal data collection.

**4. The methodological challenges of record linkage**

This theme will include papers on state-of-the-art techniques for record linkage. Techniques might include methods for record linkage, disclosure control, data management and analysis of linked data.

**5. Confidentiality, disclosure and ethical issues**

The linkage of potentially sensitive data for health research and health care improvement raises various ethical issues. This theme will include papers that evaluate, for example, the public perception of record linkage, or advance the debate about balancing people's right to privacy and the public benefits of linked data for health research.



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## Training Workshop

Prior to the conference, we will be hosting a five-day training session on analysing linked health data (12-16 September 2009). This course will be led by Professor D'Arcy Holman who is based at the School of Population Health, University of Western Australia. He is a leading figure in the field of linked health data and he will be presenting one of the keynote lectures at the conference which follows immediately after this workshop. Topics will include:

- Using linkable registry data in health services research
- Measuring health services utilisation
- Characterising clinical populations using linkable registry data
- Evaluating health services outcome
- Theory and practice of risk adjustment in health services research

## Learning Outcomes at a Glance

Participants will develop a sound grasp of research methods for the conceptualisation and construction of numerators and denominators used in disease surveillance and the analysis of health care utilisation and outcomes. Using linkage registry data, they will be able to write syntax in SPSS or Stata to prepare files for analysis, derive exposure and outcome variables, relate numerators and denominators and produce results from statistical procedures. Participants will also learn about the design of a Data Linkage System as a comprehensive population-based approach to combining the resources of a number of birth, death and disease registries and routinely collected health services administrative data.

## Course Outline

Rapid growth in health services research projects using routinely collected administrative data with a potential for linkage has led to a shortfall in analysts' skills. Some researchers understand epidemiological principles, but are unfamiliar with the specialised computing skills needed to analyse data files that can be potentially linked together using matching or a common ID number. Others have a strong grasp of computing concepts, but lack an adequate theoretical base to design high quality applications to answer research questions. This short-course endeavours to fill these gaps in analysts' training by combining the principles of health care epidemiology with hands-on practical exercises in the implementation of computing solutions.

## Who should attend?

Health researchers, clinical practitioners and health service managers who wish to get better value out of working with birth, death and disease registries and routinely collected administrative health data (such as primary care, pharmacy and hospital morbidity data).

## Course Format

A modular structure provides participants with a theoretical grounding in the classroom on each topic, followed by a training session on the corresponding computing solutions. Participants use fictitious but realistic linked registry data files on CD-ROM in hands-on exercises. This unit can be taken in SPSS or Stata according to each participant's preference. The computing component assumes a basic familiarity with computing syntax used in programs such as SPSS or Stata and methods of basic statistical analysis of fixed-format data files.

## About the Principal Instructor

**Professor D'Arcy Holman** MBBS MPH(Harv.) PhD GCLaw GAICD FACE FPHAA FAFPHM FAIM

Professor D'Arcy Holman holds the Foundation Chair in Public Health at The University of Western Australia. The world class WA Data Linkage System was instigated by Professor Holman in 1995 as one of only six comprehensive systems of its type in the world. His research interests focus on the use of innovative epidemiological methods to study the utilisation and outcomes of health services. His published works exceed 400 and he has made significant contributions to research training in Australia and by teaching courses by invitation in other locations around the globe. He was recently appointed to the international panel for review of the Canadian Institutes for Health Research and was awarded Permanent Guest Professor status at the School of Medicine at Zhejiang University in the People's Republic of China. Professor Holman has received the Centenary Medal of Australia for his voluntary services to the Australian health system and in 2006 he was awarded his country's highest professional honour for his field, the Sydney Sax Public Health Medal, in recognition of his contributions to the promotion and protection of the community's health.

**EARLY REGISTRATION FOR BOTH THE CONFERENCE AND THE WORKSHOP IS RECOMMENDED**

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## ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

- Location** The **International Conference** is from **17-19 September 2009**, preceded by the **Training Workshop** from **12-16 September 2009** at the University of St Andrews. You are welcome to attend either or both. Details of the exact venues will be circulated to registered participants.
- Submitting a paper** Those interested in presenting a paper at the conference should submit an abstract of no more than one page via email to [ship@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:ship@st-andrews.ac.uk). You should include author details and specify which of the five conference themes your paper is being submitted to. The closing date for abstracts is Monday 1st June 2009. You will be informed by Friday 26th June 2009 if your abstract has been accepted.
- Registration** To register for the **Conference** please complete the on-line registration form at: <https://onlineshop.st-andrews.ac.uk/events/eventdetails.asp?eventid=37>
- The fee for the conference is **£230**, which includes registration, two lunches, coffees/teas, one conference dinner and a ceilidh (the fee for postgraduates and the unwaged will be **£100**). Registration will close on Monday 17th August 2009. Accepted abstracts will only be included in the programme if the presenter is registered by this date. The conference handbook will be circulated by Monday 31st August 2009.
- To register for the **Training Workshop** please complete the on-line registration form at: <https://onlineshop.st-andrews.ac.uk/events/eventdetails.asp?eventid=36>
- The fee for the workshop is **£230**, which includes registration, lunches and coffees/teas (the fee for postgraduates and the unwaged will be **£60** although the number of such spaces will be limited so please apply early). Registration for the workshop will close on Monday 17th August 2009. Total places for the workshop are limited to 30, so please book early.
- Accommodation** You are responsible for booking your own accommodation. St Andrews has a wide range of accommodation to suit every budget; for further information log on to [www.stayinstandrews.co.uk](http://www.stayinstandrews.co.uk). Central hotel accommodation can be found at the Rusacks Hotel and there are also Bed & Breakfast establishments on Murray Place in St Andrews.
- Enquiries** Please direct any further enquiries to [ship@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:ship@st-andrews.ac.uk).

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