Principles of Analytic Graphics

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Principles of Analytic Graphics

- Principle 1: Show comparisons
- Evidence for a hypothesis is always *relative* to another competing hypothesis.
- Always ask "Compared to What?"

Show Comparisons

Reference: Butz AM, *et al.*, *JAMA Pediatrics*, 2011.

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- Evidence for a hypothesis is always *relative* to another competing hypothesis.
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- Principle 2: Show causality, mechanism, explanation, systematic structure
- What is your causal framework for thinking about a question?

Show causality, mechanism

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- Principle 3: Show multivariate data
- Multivariate = more than 2 variables
- The real world is multivariate
- Need to "escape flatland"

Show Multivariate Data

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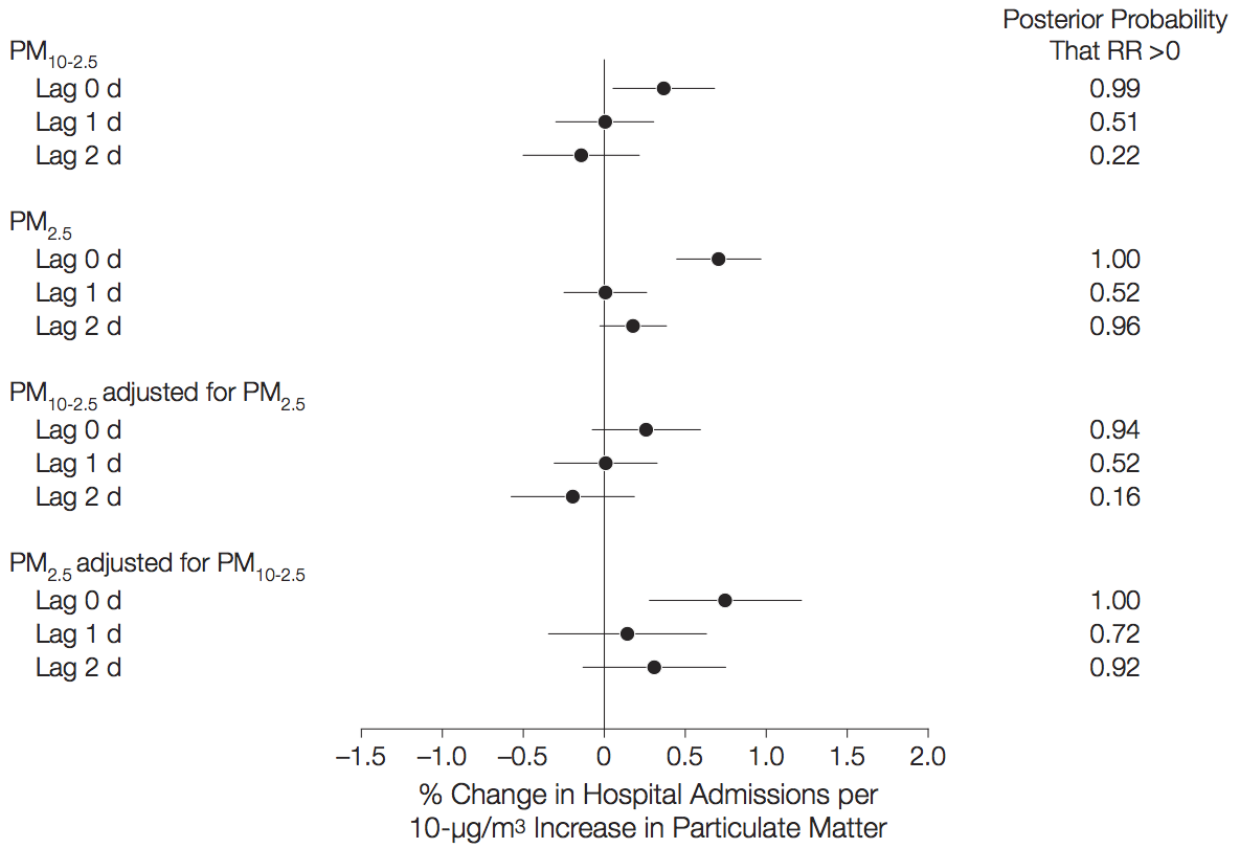
- Principle 4: Integration of evidence
- Completely integrate words, numbers, images, diagrams
- Data graphics should make use of many modes of data presentation
- Don't let the tool drive the analysis

Integrate Different Modes of Evidence

Figure 2. Percentage Change in Emergency Hospital Admissions Rate for Cardiovascular Diseases per a 10-µg/m³ Increase in Particulate Matter



Estimates are on average across 108 counties. $PM_{2.5}$ indicates particulate matter is 2.5 µm or less in aerodynamic diameter; PM_{10}, particulate matter is 10 µm or less in aerodynamic diameter; $PM_{10\text{-}2.5}$, particulate matter is greater than 2.5 µm and 10 µm or less in aerodynamic diameter; RR, relative risk. Error bars indicate 95% posterior intervals.

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- A data graphic should tell a complete story that is credible

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- Principle 6: Content is king
- Analytical presentations ultimately stand or fall depending on the quality, relevance, and integrity of their content

Summary

- Principle 1: Show comparisons
- Principle 2: Show causality, mechanism, explanation
- Principle 3: Show multivariate data
- Principle 4: Integrate multiple modes of evidence
- Principle 5: Describe and document the evidence
- Principle 6: Content is king

References

Edward Tufte (2006). *Beautiful Evidence*, Graphics Press LLC.
www.edwardtufte.com