

Meta-analysis: a journey to simple research

- 1) When I was still a PhD student, I did pretty much the same as the majority of statistics students and strived to publish papers in top statistics journals. And from that point of view, my performance during the PhD study could be rated as satisfactory.
- 2) Shortly after the beginning of my research career, I started to receive a typical type of rejection letters from top statistics journals, with the main reason that my papers were written too simply and thus too easy to be understood, no matter whether the underlying ideas are enough innovative or significant. When the door of top statistics journals gradually closed to me, I suddenly realized my “being able to write a simple paper” talent may, in fact, opened another door for me.
- 3) When statisticians get a headache and visit medical doctors, they are often treated with effective medicine so that the headache is either cured or at least temporarily relieved. On the other hand, however, when medical doctors need statistical methods, they usually get a lot of headaches reading papers written by statisticians, partially because many of these papers were written in a “pretend-to-be-deep” style (so as to increase the chance to be published in top statistics journals) even though the statistical idea behind it may actually be quite simple.
- 4) If statisticians don't want to be mistakenly classified as “bad guys”, then it is time for a change of the current statistics culture. We should be able to present the statistical methods in a simple, elegant and practical way so that practitioners can easily understand and use, and with the possibility that they will call from the deepest of their hearts that our statistical methods save their life or make their life easy.
- 5) Towards that end, I am proud so far of my “simple research” work in developing new statistical methods for meta-analysis, mainly encouraged by dozens of thank-you letters from researchers and medical doctors all over the world. Should you also enjoy reading our papers or have comments, please do not hesitate to share with us your words and thoughts. Your little encouragement will, undoubtedly, turn to new and great energy for us, in particular for my PhD students, to continue on the path of simple research.