

## BOOK REVIEW

# Something Doesn't Add Up: Surviving Statistics in a Post-Truth Age

by Paul Goodwin

2020; Pp. 248; Profile Books; ISBN13: 9781788162586

Statistics is a subject most of the clinicians and students frown upon when they encounter it. Nevertheless, we cannot escape it as our day-to-day practices are shaped by statistics. From the choice of medication to the type of surgical intervention, statistics serves as a guide for clinicians to treat their patients. As we enter this digital age which heavily focuses on information technology, statistical thinking will eventually be a necessity for an efficient citizenship on par with the ability to read and write.

Statistic can be just a series of numbers that do not make sense; hence one must acquire the knowledge and wisdom to analyse and comprehend the significance of these numbers. In this book, the author highlights the pitfall of following the numbers blindly as the numbers/surveys can be easily manipulated to suit one's vested interest.

Although this book is about statistics, the author does not bore the readers with pure numbers and equations. Instead, lots of exciting and vivid examples are presented across all sectors with carried bring-home messages.

I am pleasantly surprised to gain knowledge on various topics that I have never thought of. For example, do you

know that the 'sacred'  $p < 0.05$  which clinicians like to quote, is a convenient threshold set by Ronald Fisher with no rationale. In later years, despite Fisher advocating the practice of just stating the  $p$  value and let readers judge the plausibility of a hypothesis on their own, the 5 percent fixation was well-ingrained into practice.

Personally, I like the summary in the appendix where the author has listed eleven questions to ask about statistics. They serve as an easy guide to navigate through the complex concepts of statistics and determine whether the numbers make sense.

Either you are interested in knowing more about the current data-driven world or you just want to spend quality time reading some stories, this book will be a good weekend reading material.

**Ren Yi Kow, MS Orth**  
**Department of Orthopaedics, Traumatology and Rehabilitation**  
**International Islamic University Malaysia**  
**Kuantan, Malaysia**