As a junior doctor in the late eighties, I was fortunate to hear a talk by David Sackett and fell in love with his book on clinical epidemiology (before the term evidence-based medicine, now led by Sharon Straus). This is a tough act to follow, but this excellently written book packs in a lot of material in just under 400 pages. The authors have done a great job in focusing on the clinical relevance of the material and even include helpful tips on communicating bad prognoses to patients. For readers who are already familiar with the material, this book will be an excellent aide-memoire and refresher, though for novice readers some may find the brevity a little hard to follow. Philosophically, my teaching experience has led me to embed statistical methods within a problem-based approach, so I suspect many ‘numophobia doctors’¹ may stay clear of chapter 10 which provides helpful summaries for numerous statistical techniques. The only major omission I felt was the paucity on health economics, an area of increasing importance for all clinicians, in this cash-strapped era. Overall, a very useful textbook though I’m not sure how many doctors will really carry this book around with them.

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Reference

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