

Preface

The Oberwolfach Conferences on Medical Statistics take place every two or three years. According to the custom of the Mathematical Research Institute Oberwolfach, a series of presentations take place during this week, and there are opportunities for informal exchanges of scientific ideas at meals and during breaks. The aim of these conferences is to inform the participants about the current state of research and to promote new research initiatives and collaborations.

The 1997 conference was dedicated to mathematical models for diagnosis and prognosis and covered different aspects of this broad area in ten sessions with special subtopics (see program following). Forty-three experts came from Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Norway, The Netherlands and the U.S.A. The meeting highlighted the contributions of biostatistical methodology, but there were also contributions on medical aspects.

A selected number of 14 papers are published in the present special issue. Patrick Royston joined the two conference organizers to serve as guest editors. Some of the contributions had already been published elsewhere and therefore were not submitted for publication in the present issue. The abstracts of all the papers can be found in the Tagungsbericht 08/1997 of the Mathematische Forschungsinstitut Oberwolfach.

We would like to thank the Mathematical Research Institute Oberwolfach for the opportunity to hold this meeting, for free accommodation, and for wonderful hospitality. The well-known ‘Oberwolfach atmosphere’ of the Institute and the spectacular surroundings of the Black Forest, which we explored in the traditional Wednesday afternoon excursion, provided an ideal setting for scientific exchange. We would also like to thank the chairmen of the sessions, the speakers, and all the participants for their active involvement. We also thank Dr Ted Colton and Dr Ralph D’Agostino and *Statistics in Medicine* for their support in publishing this special issue and especially Katrin Jensen and Petra Fischer for all their assistance.

Helmut Schäfer
Mitchell H. Gail
Patrick Royston

Guest Editors