

CIRA Methodology and Biostatistics Seminar Series

“Respondent-Driven Sampling: A Network-Based Method for Sampling Hidden Populations and Studying the Structure of Large Social Networks”

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Chain-referral samples are subject to a number of well-known biases: (1) those with large personal networks tend to be oversampled by snowball-type methods, because the numbers of recruitment paths leading to them are larger; (2) recruitment reflects differential association, in which people tend to associate with others who are similar in race, ethnicity, age, level of education, and drug preference; (3) some groups recruit more energetically than others, so their distinctive recruitment patterns are over-represented in the sample; and finally, (4) when sampling from a hidden population the seeds with which sampling begins cannot be selected randomly. For these reasons, the composition of the sample does not reflect the composition of the population from which it was drawn.

Respondent-driven sampling (RDS) is a chain referral sampling method that employs a statistical theory of the sampling process to control for these and other sources of bias and thereby produce unbiased population estimates. The method also provides information on network structure, including means for identifying clusters of especially high or low risk individuals. Design, analysis and results of a CDC-funded study of active injection drug users in Meriden, Connecticut will be discussed.



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Thursday, December 4th, 2003
2:15 - 3:45 – OIT conference room
40 Temple Street, Suite 3D

Yale University Center for Interdisciplinary Research on AIDS