

# Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	v
<i>Preface</i>	xiii
<i>About the authors</i>	xv
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xvi
<i>How to use this book</i>	xvii
<i>How to use your VitalSource eBook</i>	xix
<b>Chapter 1 Epidemiology is ...</b>	<b>1</b>
A case of food poisoning	3
Subdisciplines of epidemiology	4
On epidemics	6
An historical epidemic	8
The beginnings	10
What does epidemiology offer?	15
What do epidemiologists do?	16
A natural experiment	22
Conclusions	24
Recommended reading	25
References	25
<b>Chapter 2 How long is a piece of string? Measuring disease frequency</b>	<b>27</b>
What are we measuring?	28
The concepts: Prevalence and incidence	30
Measuring disease occurrence in practice: Epidemiological studies	35
Measuring disease occurrence in practice: Using routine data	41
Other measures commonly used in public health	47
Global health indicators	51
Summary	61
Questions	63
References	63
<b>Chapter 3 Who, what, where and when? Descriptive epidemiology</b>	<b>65</b>
Case reports and case series	67
Vital statistics and mortality data	68
Morbidity data	75

Creative use of existing data	81
Confidentiality	87
Summary	88
Questions	88
Recommended reading	88
References	89
<b>Chapter 4 Healthy research: Study designs for public health</b>	<b>92</b>
The ideal study	94
Intervention studies or trials	95
Observational studies	100
A word about ethics	113
Summary	116
Questions	116
Recommended reading	117
References	118
<b>Chapter 5 Why? Linking exposure and disease</b>	<b>120</b>
Looking for associations	121
Ratio measures (relative risk)	123
Difference measures (attributable risk)	129
Relative risk versus attributable risk: An example	138
Looking for associations when the measures are continuous	139
Summary	140
Questions	141
Recommended reading	143
References	143
<b>Chapter 6 Heads or tails? The role of chance</b>	<b>145</b>
Random sampling error	146
Statistical significance: Could an apparent association have arisen by chance?	147
Confidence intervals	148
Power: Could we have missed a true association?	151
Interpreting $p$ -values and confidence intervals	152
Statistical versus clinical significance	155
Summary	157
Questions	157
Recommended reading	158
References	158
<b>Chapter 7 All that glitters is not gold: The problem of error</b>	<b>159</b>
Sources of error in epidemiological studies	160
Selection bias	161
Measurement or information error	171



Summary	181
Questions	182
Recommended reading	183
References	183
<b>Chapter 8 Muddled waters: The challenge of confounding</b>	<b>185</b>
An example of confounding: Is alcohol a risk factor for lung cancer?	187
Characteristics of a confounder	189
The effects of confounding	190
Control of confounding through study design	195
Control of confounding in data analysis	200
Confounding: The bottom line	206
Questions	207
Recommended reading	208
References	209
<b>Chapter 9 Reading between the lines: Reading and writing epidemiological papers</b>	<b>210</b>
The research question and study design	212
Internal validity	212
So what? Are the results important?	221
Generalisability (external validity)	222
Descriptive studies	223
Writing papers	223
Summary: One swallow doesn't make a summer	224
Questions	225
Recommended reading	225
References	226
<b>Chapter 10 Who sank the boat? Association and causation</b>	<b>228</b>
What do we mean by a cause?	230
Association versus causation	233
Evaluating causation	235
An example: Does <i>H. pylori</i> cause stomach cancer?	241
Conclusion	242
Questions	242
Recommended reading	243
References	243
<b>Chapter 11 Assembling the building blocks: Reviews and their uses</b>	<b>244</b>
What is a systematic review?	245
Specifying the research question	247
Identifying the literature	247
Appraising the literature	249