



# WSS NEWS

WASHINGTON  
STATISTICAL  
SOCIETY

January 2006

## Nominations Sought for 2006 Julius Shiskin Award

Nominations are invited for the annual Julius Shiskin Memorial Award for Economic Statistics. The Award is given in recognition of unusually original and important contributions in the development of economic statistics or in the use of statistics in interpreting the economy. Contributions are recognized for statistical research, development of statistical tools, application of information technology techniques, use of economic statistical programs, management of statistical programs, or developing public understanding of measurement issues. The Award was established in 1980 by the Washington Statistical Society (WSS) and is now cosponsored by the WSS, the National Association for Business Economics, and the Business and Economics Statistics Section of the American Statistical Association. The 2005 award recipient was Erwin Diewert, University of British Columbia, in recognition of his path-breaking economic theoretical innovations, notably in index number theory, which have been adapted to improve national economic statistics around the world.

Because the program was initiated many years ago, it is little wonder that statisticians and economists often ask, "Who was Julius Shiskin?" At the time of his death in 1978, "Julie" was the Commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and earlier served as the Chief Statistician at the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and the Chief Economic Statistician and Assistant Director of the Census Bureau. Throughout his career, he was known as an innovator. At Census he was instrumental in developing an electronic computer method for seasonal adjustment. In 1961, he published *Signals of Recession and Recovery*, which laid the groundwork for the calculation of monthly economic indicators, and he developed the monthly Census report *Business Conditions Digest* to disseminate them to the public. In 1969, he was appointed Chief Statistician at the Office of Management and Budget where he developed the policies and procedures that govern the release of key economic indicators (Statistical Policy Directive Number 3), and originated a *Social Indicators* report. In 1973, he was selected to head BLS where he was instrumental in preserving the integrity and independence of the BLS labor force data and directed the most comprehensive revision in the history of the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which included a new CPI for all urban consumers.

Nominations for the 2006 award are now being accepted. Individuals or groups in the public or private sector from any country can be nominated. The award will be presented with an honorarium of \$750 plus additional recognition from the sponsors. A nomination form and a list of all previous recipients are available on the ASA Website at <[www.amstat.org/sections/bus\\_econ/shiskin.html](http://www.amstat.org/sections/bus_econ/shiskin.html)> or by writing to the Julius Shiskin Award Committee, Attn: Monica Clark, American Statistical Association, 1429 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-3402. Completed nominations must be received by April 1, 2006. For further information contact Rich Allen, Julius Shiskin Award Committee Secretary, at <[reisepaar2@earthlink.net](mailto:reisepaar2@earthlink.net)>.

<b>WSS and Other Seminars</b> (All events are open to any interested persons)	
<b>January</b> <b>17</b> <b>Tues.</b>	<b>Statistical Methods for Alerting Algorithms in Biosurveillance</b>
<b>19</b> <b>Thurs.</b>	<b>The Use of Contact History Data for Exploring Survey Nonresponse in Federal Demographic Surveys. (A Joint Seminar)</b>
<b>March</b> <b>28</b> <b>Tues.</b>	<b>Estimating Drug Use Prevalence Using Latent Class Models with Item Count Response as One of the Indicators</b>

Also available on the Web at the following URL: <http://www.science.gmu.edu/~wss>

## **Announcements**

### **THE JEANNE E. GRIFFITH MENTORING AWARD**

On receiving the Roger Herriot Award in June 2001, Jeanne E. Griffith said:

One of the most rewarding aspects (of Federal statistics) for me was the opportunity to promote creative activities and energies among my staff...When I have had the blessing to mentor young people in their careers, I have tried to emphasize.....(that) only they, themselves, can make the most of the)...chances that life presents.

Dr. Griffith died in August 2001 after working for more than 25 years in the Federal statistical system. Throughout her career, and especially in her latter senior management positions at the National Center for Education Statistics and the National Science Foundation, one of Jeanne's highest priorities was to mentor and encourage younger staff at all levels to learn, to grow, and to recognize and seize career opportunities as they came along.

The Jeanne E. Griffith Mentoring Award has been established to encourage mentoring of younger staff in the Federal statistical system. It is presented annually, beginning in 2003, to a supervisor who is nominated by co-workers and supervisors, and chosen by the Award Selection Committee.

The award is co-sponsored by the Interagency Council on Statistical Policy, the Council for Excellence in Government, the Washington Statistical Society, the Social Statistics and Government Statistics Sections of the American Statistical Association, and the Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics.

Nominations for 2006 will be accepted beginning in February 2006. The last date for submission of nominations is March 31, 2006, and the Award Committee will make its determination of the award winner by May 1, 2006. The award will consist of a \$1000 honorarium and a citation, which will be presented at a ceremony arranged by the co-sponsors in June 2006.

The winning mentor will be selected for his or her efforts in supporting the work and developing the careers of younger staff. Examples of typical mentoring activities include:

- Advising junior staff to help them create career opportunities, networking skills, and contacts for

growth and development;

- Counseling junior staff and providing resources to help develop their technical writing, analysis, presentation and organizational skills and knowledge;
- Encouraging junior staff growth and career development through attendance and oral presentations at meetings with higher level officials, staffs of other agencies, professional associations, training courses, and conferences;
- Motivating junior staff and building self confidence through feedback on their efforts, being a listener when that is needed, and creating a caring and supportive environment;
- Serving as a role model for junior staff through professional expertise, information and insights, balancing collegial and personal roles, and including everyone across rank, race, ethnicity, and seniority.

For further information on the award, contact Ed Spar, Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics (COPAFS) by phone: 703-836-0404; fax: 703-684-3410; or by e-mail at [copafs@aol.com](mailto:copafs@aol.com). The nomination cover sheet and guidelines form-or a photocopy of it-should be attached to a nomination memorandum or letter. Forms can be obtained by contacting Ed Spar, or by downloading from the COPAFS website at <http://www.copafs.org>. All nominations should be returned to the Jeanne E. Griffith Mentoring Award Committee, c/o COPAFS, 1429 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA 22314 no later than March 31, 2006.

### **SIGSTAT Topics for January 2006 – May 2006**

January 11, 2006: SAS PROC QUANTREG (<http://www.sas.com>)

The QUANTREG procedure models the effects of covariates on the conditional quantiles of a response variable by means of a quantile regression. Ordinary least-squares (OLS) regression models the relationship between one or more covariates  $X$  and the *conditional mean* of the response variable  $Y$  given  $X=x$ . Quantile regression extends the regression model to conditional quantiles of the response variable, such as the median or 90<sup>th</sup> percentile. Quantile regression is particularly useful when the rate of change in the conditional quantile, expressed by the regression coefficients, depends on the quantile. Charlie Hallahan will be the speaker.

February 8, 2006: SAS PROC ENTROPY (<http://www.sas.com>)

The ENTROPY procedure implements a parametric method of linear estimation based on Generalized Maximum entropy. The ENTROPY procedure is suitable when there are outliers in the data and robustness is required, or when the model is ill-posed or undetermined for the observed data, or for regressions involving small data sets. Charlie Hallahan will be the speaker.

March 8, 2006: SAS PROC GLIMMIX (<http://www.sas.com>)

The GLIMMIX procedure fits statistical models to data with correlations or nonconstant variability and where the response is not necessarily normally distributed. These models are known as generalized linear mixed models (GLMM). The GLMMs, like linear mixed models, assume normal (Gaussian) random effects. Conditional on these random effects, data can have any distribution in the exponential family. In the absence of random effects, the GLIMMIX procedure fits generalized linear models (fit by the GENMOD procedure). Charlie Hallahan will be the speaker.

April 19, 2006: Introduction to Enterprise Guide 4.1 for Statistical Analysis (<http://www.sas.com>)

The demo begins with a quick tour through the layout of Enterprise Guide (EG) as a menu-based

interface to SAS procedures. Emphasis in this workshop will be on the statistical capabilities of EG. In particular, a set of data (put together using enhanced features of the query builder task) will serve as a case study for a forecasting exercise. The demo will show how code generated by EG can be customized, stored, and rerun, and custom reports saved with new Report Controls Integration. Linda Atkinson and Charlie Hallahan will be the speakers.

May 17, 2006: Univariate Detrending Using SAS: Some Examples and Applications  
(<http://www.sas.com>)

Detrending or filtering is an important tool for the macroeconomist studying business cycle fluctuations. Business cycles can be thought of as deviations of output from its trend. As such, detrending or filtering allows us to focus on the 'cyclical' properties of output. Four methods of detrending using SAS will be presented: Beveridge-Nelson decomposition, Hodrick-Prescott filter, Baxter-King filter, and Unobserved Components. Two applications of univariate detrending are also presented. The first is to use SAS to generate 'stylized facts' of the business cycle and the second is to examine the consequences of detrending on the effects of monetary policy on output. Ban Cheah, Westat, will be the speaker.

**SIGSTAT** is the Special Interest Group in Statistics for the **CPCUG**, the Capital PC User Group, and **WINFORMS**, the Washington Institute for Operations Research Service and Management Science.

All meetings are in Room S3031, 1800 M St, NW from **12:00 to 1:00 (note new time)**. Enter the South Tower & take the elevator to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor to check in at the guard's desk.

First-time attendees should contact Charlie Hallahan, 202-694-5051, [hallahan@ers.usda.gov](mailto:hallahan@ers.usda.gov), and leave their name. Directions to the building & many links of statistical interest can be found at the **SIGSTAT** website, <http://www.cpcug.org/user/sigstat/>.

**Note from the WSS NEWS Editor**

Items for publication in the March issue of the WSS NEWS should be submitted no later than January 31, 2006. E-mail items to Michael Feil at [michael.feil@usda.gov](mailto:michael.feil@usda.gov).

## Program Announcement

- Title:** Statistical Methods for Alerting Algorithms in Biosurveillance
- Chair:** Myron Katzoff, National Center for Health Statistics
- Speakers:** Howard S. Burkom, National Security Technology Department, The Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory
- Date/Time:** Tuesday, January 17, 2006 / 12:30 - 2:00 p.m.
- Location:** National Center for Health Statistics, room 1403A, 3311 Toledo Road, Hyattsville, MD (Metro: Green Line, Prince George's Plaza and then about a 10 minute walk). Note: please try to arrive 15-30 minutes early because of possible security screening delays.
- Sponsors:** WSS Section on National Defense and Homeland Security
- Abstract:** Syndromic surveillance involves the monitoring of available data sources for early warning of outbreaks of unspecified disease or of specified disease before the confirmation of identifying symptoms, with the objective to complement physician sentinel surveillance with false alarm rates acceptable to the public health infrastructure. Data sources include clinical data such as counts of syndrome-specific emergency department visits or physician office visits, and nonclinical data such as over-the-counter remedy sales and school/work absentee rates.

The terrorist attacks of 2001 added urgency to the development and activation of automation-aided biosurveillance, and system applications have extended to monitoring of natural public health threats such as the onset of influenza season as well as to recent new ones such as West Nile virus, the SARS epidemic, and a potential avian flu pandemic. Effective systems require a combination of expertise in medicine and epidemiology, in information technology, and in statistics and related fields of analysis.

A common approach among system developers has been to adapt chart-based methods from the field of statistical process control. Major obstacles to this approach are the evolving and often nonstationary input data streams, the uncertainty of the nature of the signal to be detected, and the presence of systematic or periodic behavior in the data background. Thus, robust detection performance, measured by timeliness and sensitivity at controlled alert rates, requires a combination of modeling and process control suitable to the characteristics of the monitored data.

The technical part of this presentation discusses several algorithmic approaches to the monitoring of syndromic time series, including adaptations of standard control charts, Riffenburgh's moving F statistic, and scan statistics. An interactive spreadsheet environment will be used to enable detailed examination of the positive and negative features of these methods on several data types. A generalized exponential smoothing approach to data modeling will be discussed, and a control chart derived from it will be used to illustrate a detection evaluation methodology.

## Program Announcement

Title: **The Use of Contact History Data for Exploring Survey Nonresponse in Federal Demographic Surveys. (A Joint Seminar)**

Chair: John Dixon, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Speakers: Nancy Bates, U.S. Census Bureau  
James M. Dahlhamer, National Center for Health Statistics/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Date/Time: Thursday, January 19, 2006 / 12:30 - 2 p.m.

Location: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Conference Center Room 9. To be placed on the seminar list attendance list at the Bureau of Labor Statistics you need to e-mail your name, affiliation, and seminar name to [wss\\_seminar@bls.gov](mailto:wss_seminar@bls.gov) (underscore after 'wss') by noon at least 2 days in advance of the seminar or call 202-691-7524 and leave a message. Bring a photo ID to the seminar. BLS is located at 2 Massachusetts Avenue, NE. Use the Red Line to Union Station.

Sponsor: Methodology Section, WSS

Abstracts:

### **Reluctance to Participate in Federal Demographic Surveys: An Exploration of the National Health Interview Survey and Consumer Expenditure Survey using Survey Process Data**

Nancy Bates and Andrea Piani  
U.S. Census Bureau

In 2002-2003, the Census Bureau designed an automated contact history data collection system known as the Contact History Instrument or CHI. The CHI was developed to systematically record the number of contact attempts, mode, date and time of attempt and other details behind interim outcomes in personal visit surveys (e.g., reasons for refusals and strategies attempted).

Using CHI data from the 2005 National Health Interview Survey and the 2005 Consumer Expenditure Survey, we explore reasons why some households are reluctant to participate in the interview process. We investigate the extent of reluctance, what the most frequently cited reasons are, and whether these vary by characteristics such as survey topic, household composition, and other auxiliary variables such as region, urbanicity, or mode of contact. We also report how patterns of reluctance may change as the number of contacts increases. Finally we explore whether some reasons are more highly correlated with the decision to refuse the survey. In closing we offer recommendations how CHI data can be used as a feedback mechanism for improving field productivity and understanding the reasons people participate in federal surveys.

### **Developing Models of Initial Contact in the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)**

James M. Dahlhamer, Barbara J. Stussman, Catherine M. Simile and Beth Taylor  
National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Response rates in government surveys have been declining over the past two decades raising concerns about the ability of survey estimates to accurately reflect the characteristics of the target population. One of the reasons for declining response rates is the reduced accessibility

of households, arising, in part, from increased physical control of access to housing units and household compositions in which no one is home for long periods of time. In an effort to achieve acceptable rates and quality of response, interviewers need to be as efficient as possible in contacting sample households so as to leave ample time for gaining respondent cooperation. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to identify factors that influence contactability.

The National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), an on-going population-based health survey conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, recently adopted the stand-alone, Blaise-based Contact History Instrument (CHI). Interviewers use CHI to record critical information on each contact attempt, including mode, date, and time of attempt, features of doorstep interactions, and strategies used for making contact and gaining cooperation. Using core survey and CHI data from the 2005 NHIS, models of initial contact with sample households are developed and tested. In addition to social-environmental (e.g., MSA status, region of residence) and household-level measures (e.g., the presence of children, household size, etc.) known to influence contactability, the role of interviewer strategies (e.g., time and mode of contact attempt, information-seeking behaviors) is assessed. By identifying attributes of difficult-to-contact households and the strategies for improving accessibility, survey procedures can be adjusted to improve the efficiency of field operations.

## Program Announcement

- Title:** **Estimating Drug Use Prevalence Using Latent Class Models with Item Count Response as One of the Indicators**
- Chair:** Dean H. Judson, U.S. Bureau of the Census
- Speaker:** Paul Biemer, RTI International  
WebPage: <http://www.rti.org/experts.cfm?objectid=6E703887-343D-4D32-8DDA0F933AA1A886>
- Discussant:** Douglas Wright, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
- Date/Time:** Tuesday, March 28, 2006 / 12:30 - 2 p.m.
- Location:** Bureau of Labor Statistics, Conference Center in G440. To be placed on the seminar list attendance list at the Bureau of Labor Statistics you need to e-mail your name, affiliation, and seminar name to [wss\\_seminar@bls.gov](mailto:wss_seminar@bls.gov) (underscore after 'wss') by noon at least 2 days in advance of the seminar or call 202-691-7524 and leave a message. Bring a photo ID to the seminar. BLS is located at 2 Massachusetts Avenue, NE. Use the Red Line to Union Station.
- Sponsor:** Methodology Section, WSS
- Abstract:** The item count (IC) method for estimating the prevalence of sensitive behaviors was applied to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) to estimate the prevalence of past year cocaine use. Despite considerable effort and research to refine and adapt the IC method to this survey, the method failed to produce estimates that were any larger than the estimates based on self-reports. Further analysis indicated the problem to be measurement error in the IC responses. To address the problem, a new model-based estimator was proposed to correct the IC estimates for measurement error and produce less biased prevalence estimates. The model combines the IC data, replicated measurements of the IC items, and responses to the cocaine use question to obtain estimates of the classification error in the observed data. The data were treated as fallible indicators of (latent) true values and traditional latent class analysis assumptions were made to obtain an identifiable model. The resulting estimates of the cocaine use prevalence were approximately 43 percent larger than the self-report only estimates and the estimated underreporting rates were consistent with those estimated from other studies of drug use underreporting.



## Employment

As a service to local statisticians, *WSS News* provides notification of employment opportunities and description of those seeking employment here in the Washington, DC, area. Readers are encouraged to take advantage of this feature of the newsletter. The deadline for inserting notices is five (5) weeks before the publication date. Those interested should email or call Anne Peterson, at [apeterson@insightpolicyresearch.com](mailto:apeterson@insightpolicyresearch.com) or (703) 387-3032.

### WESTAT

#### AN EMPLOYEE-OWNED RESEARCH CORPORATION

Westat is an employee-owned corporation headquartered in the suburbs of Washington, DC (Rockville, Maryland). We provide statistical consulting and survey research to the agencies of the U.S. Government and to a broad range of business and institutional clients. With a strong technical and managerial staff and a long record of quality research, Westat has become one of the leading survey research and statistical consulting organizations in the United States.

Our company was founded in 1961 by three statisticians. The current staff of more than 1,800 includes over 60 statisticians, as well as research, technical, and administrative staff. In addition, our professional staff is supported by data collection and processing personnel situated locally and in field sites around the country. The work atmosphere is open, progressive, and highly conducive to professional growth.

Our statistical efforts continue to expand in areas such as the environment, energy, health, education, and human resources. Westat statisticians are actively involved in teaching graduate-level courses in statistical methods and survey methodology in collaborative arrangements with area colleges and universities.

We are currently recruiting for the following statistical position:

#### **Survey Sampling Statistician (Job Code WSS/DRM/6001)**

Three or more years of relevant experience in sample design and selection, frames development, weighting, imputation, and variance estimation. Must have a master's or doctoral degree in statistics and have excellent writing skills. Coursework in sample survey design is highly desirable.

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## **Statistician (Medicine)**

Walter Reed Army Medical Center has an opening for a full-time permanent Statistician (Medicine) GS12 position (\$64K-\$84K plus benefits). Responsibilities include design, sample size estimation and data analysis of medical research. Opportunities include participation in IRB review process and publication of journal articles. Candidate must be experienced in statistics, with a graduate degree and knowledge of statistical theory, applications and software. US Citizenship required. For more information about the position and how to apply, email DCISTATS@na.amedd.army.mil.

## **STATISTICIAN STAFF SCIENTIST – FACILITY HEAD**

Department of Health and Human Services  
National Institutes of Health  
National Institute on Aging  
Intramural Research Program

The Laboratory of Epidemiology, Demography and Biometry (LEDB) of the National Institute on Aging (NIA) is recruiting a Staff Scientist to lead the Biometry Section of the LEDB, within its Intramural Research Program (IRP) located in Bethesda MD. LEDB has an active research agenda that utilizes several large, complex longitudinal data sets that the laboratory has collected over the past 20 years. The successful candidate will collaborate with LEDB investigators in epidemiologic research on physical function and disability, cognitive function and dementia, body composition and age-associated diseases and conditions. To lead the statistical reasoning supporting this substantive work, expertise in areas such as longitudinal and multiple outcome data analysis, missing data and informative censoring, statistical genetics, or statistical issues related to imaging is highly desirable. Position includes the potential for independent biostatistical research applicable to studies of aging and provides support for computing and data management. Potential for collaboration with statisticians at NIH, other government agencies and universities make this a highly desirable position. Applicants should have a doctorate in statistics or equivalent expertise, with experience in collaborative research documented in publications.

Salary is commensurate with research experience and accomplishments. The salary range for Staff Scientists is \$74,782-\$151,162. A full Civil Service package of benefits (including retirement, health, life and long term care insurance, Thrift Savings Plan participation, etc.) is available.

Additional information regarding the NIA IRP and the LEDB are available at the following websites:

<http://www.grc.nia.nih.gov>

<http://www.grc.nia.nih.gov/branches/ledb/index.htm>

To apply: Please send a cover letter, curriculum vitae, bibliography, statement of research interests that includes a list of 3 to 5 most important publications, and three letters of recommendation to: Peggy Grothe, Intramural Program Specialist; Office of the Scientific Director (Box 09); Vacancy # IRP-05-09; National Institute on Aging, 5600 Nathan Shock Drive, Baltimore, MD 21224-6825. Applications must be postmarked by February 1, 2006. If additional information is needed, please call 410-558-8012.

DHHS and NIH are Equal Opportunity Employers

## **ARDA INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION RESEARCH MANAGER**

The ARDA International Foundation is a 501 (c) (3) organization responsible for providing research and education programs to the vacation timeshare industry. The ARDA International Foundation is associated with the American Resort Development Association (ARDA), the trade association for the timeshare industry.

We are seeking a Research Manager to perform a wide range of research functions including development of annual research calendar, draft RFPs for research projects and coordinate selection of service providers, liaison with database provider to maintain accuracy of information housed in database, manage on-line Research Library, and manage and fulfill custom research requests for Association members and staff.

Qualifications include:

- BA/BS degree in marketing, statistics or economics or equivalent in work experience using quantitative and statistical analysis
- Proficient in Excel and Word
- Good analytical and problem-solving skills
- Excellent written communication skills
- Previous timeshare or hospitality industry experience a plus but not required

ARDA International Foundation is located in Washington, DC.

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Interested applicants may forward resume via email to “Foundation@arda.org” or via mail to:

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Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20005  
Attn: Research Manager Position

## **Senior Computational Statistics Specialist**

The American Institutes for Research (AIR) is a premier behavioral and social science research and development organization. We are currently seeking a Senior Computational Statistics Specialist for our Computer and Statistical Sciences Center (CSSC) in our Georgetown, Washington, DC headquarters.

The CSSC is AIR’s software development, statistical analysis, and Web services division. The Senior Computational Statistics Specialist will work closely with CSSC staff to design, develop and test numerical algorithms for advanced statistical procedures. This position will be responsible for: designing algorithms to implement models for statistical analysis, designing and implementing test plans for statistical programs, designing algorithms for automatic generation and validation of software test data, and participating in research and reporting of psychometric models for the social science.

A Ph.D. in Statistics or Mathematics and a strong statistical background is a must. The ability to work with software engineers in design of numerical algorithms for advanced statistical procedures; and knowledge and experience with the research methods and techniques necessary to conduct, direct and manage research projects are a must. Excellent understanding of statistical computation and SAS programming, data analysis, and applying statistical and numerical analysis knowledge and techniques to interdisciplinary areas are necessary. Demonstrated success in writing, conceptualizing, and consulting and strong writing and oral presentation skills are preferred.

AIR offers an excellent compensation and benefits package. For more information, please visit our website at [www.air.org](http://www.air.org). To apply to this position, please go to <http://jobs-airdc.icims.com> and reference Job number 4674. EOE

### **SEEKING STATISTICIANS**

Life Science Recruiters is seeking to fill a number of positions with US pharmaceutical companies for PhD Statisticians/Biostatisticians with some clinical trials experience. They range from "nearly beginners" with 1 – 2 years of experience to Department Directors. All pay in the six figures with big bonus/stock/fringe/relocation packages and are located in Maryland, California and upstate New York.

If you are interested in this field and have any clinical trial experience, I would be most grateful if you would send me your CV/resume. I could then call or e-mail you with further details.

#### **PLEASE CONTACT:**

Nancy Deeg  
NDeeg@LifeScienceRecruiters.com  
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