

Interview with Kaspar Rufibach

Mr Rufibach, the SSS congratulates you on your accreditation as a professional statistician by FENStatS. How did you find out that this possibility existed?

Through the SSS Bulletin.

What were your motivations for applying for accreditation?

My understanding is that the title "statistician" is not protected, i.e. there are no guidelines or restriction on who can call themselves that. I hope the possibility of accreditation with FENStat will help to clarify this so that at some point the hurdle for calling yourself a statistician will be higher.

Were you sufficiently supported by the SSS in this process?

Yes, the process went without any problems.

We would like you to answer a few more questions about yourself for the members of the SSS. Can you give us a few details about your education?

I studied mathematical statistics and actuarial science in Bern and then did my doctorate under Lutz Dümbgen.

What is your current professional activity and what were important earlier stations?

I have been working in clinical biostatistics at Roche in Basel since 2012. I started as a study and project statistician and since 2015 I have been a member of the group "Methods, Collaboration, and Outreach (MCO)" group within Roche Biostatistics. In the role, I research new statistical methods to optimise clinical trials, advise trial teams, teach courses on biostatistics and related topics for statisticians and non-statisticians, and collaborate with statisticians in other companies and regulatory agencies to develop or adapt guidelines for drug development. Before joining Roche, I worked for four years in Zurich in the Department of Biostatistics at the Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine. Before that, I did one year of postdoctoral research in the USA.

What do you see as the greatest challenges for statistics and the profession of statistician in the coming years?

Due to the increased awareness that many business and everyday problems can be better processed and solved by analysing data, the demand for people who can do this has increased. However, the supply of qualified personnel has not increased at the same rate. In my opinion, this has led to a situation where there is not always a guarantee of quality in statistical analyses or experimental design, which then has a negative effect on the reputation of the "statisticians". The Covid crisis has shown this impressively. I consider that counteracting this and to make decision-makers and the general public understand that statistical analyses are more than bar charts and calculating mean values, and that "more data" is not necessarily better if the wrong thing is measured (keyword "Big Data"), is an important present and future task for our profession.

Where would you like to see more activity from the SSS?

See above.