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INTRODUCTION TO LOGISTIC MODEL-BUILDING

Synthesis:

- similar to linear regression model-building,
- major principles and tools still apply, such as
 - * causal diagrams (confounding and intermediate effects),
 - * statistical testing to assess (significance of) effects, however different types of tests (Wald/likelihood-ratio tests, both with reference χ^2 -distribution),
 - * model fit statistics to compare (non-nested) models, however different type of statistics (AIC/BIC instead of R^2 -type statistics),
 - * exploration of form of effects (linearity, interaction),
 - * validation of model assumptions by residuals and diagnostics (next lecture).

List of topics covered in detail in this lecture:

- confounding and interaction,
- evaluation of linearity of continuous predictors (adaptation of tools from linear to logistic regression),
- model selection procedures,
- also brief discussion of pairwise comparisons (categorical predictors).

CONFOUNDING IN LOGISTIC MODELS

Same approach as in linear models:

- draw causal diagram to determine potential confounders,
- analyze with/without, and note “substantial” changes in estimates.

Illustration: confounding effects by `dcpct` on `dneo` or `dclox` in *Nocardia* data:

- `dcpct` not “causally later” than `dneo` and `dclox`,
- `dcpct` significant ($z = 3.15$, $P = 0.002$) in “full” model,¹
- check association between `dcpct` and `dneo/dclox`,
- comparison of estimates for `dneo` and `dclox` with/without `dcpct`:

Effect	Without <code>dcpct</code> (“crude”)	With <code>dcpct</code> (“full”)
<code>dneo</code>	2.38 (SE = 0.55, $P < 0.0005$)	2.21 (SE = 0.58, $P < 0.0005$)
<code>dclox</code>	-1.01 (SE = 0.53, $P = 0.058$)	-1.41 (SE = 0.56, $P = 0.011$)

Conclusions:

- `dneo`: no serious confounding effect by `dcpct` (7 % change, strong significance in both models),
- `dclox`: substantial confounding effect by `dcpct` (40% change², change in significance).

¹ Strictly speaking, the association should exist in non-exposed subjects.

² Calculated as $0.40/1.01 = 40\%$, using the guidelines from Section 13.5.2 of VER2, as listed for Example 16.4 in the VER2 Errata.

INTERACTION IN LOGISTIC MODELS

- same construction as in linear models using cross-product terms and/or dummy variables,
- similar statistical assessment using Wald/LR-tests,
- same interpretation on logit scale, with interaction plot, but should convert to odds-ratios (maybe probability scale).

Illustration: interaction between `dneo` and `dclox` in model for Nocardia data also including `dcpct`:

$$\text{logit}(\hat{p}) = -3.777 + 0.023 \text{ dcpct} + 3.184 \text{ dneo} + 0.446 \text{ dclox} - 2.552 \text{ neoclox}$$

Estimated logit(\hat{p}) for combinations of (`dneo`,`dclox`) and a fixed value of `dcpct` (using $a = -3.777 + 0.023 \text{ dcpct}$):

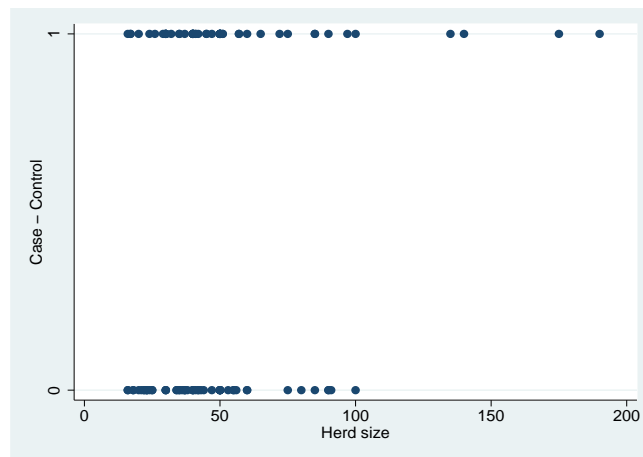
dneo	dclox	
	0	1
0	$a + 0 + 0 + 0$ $= a$	$a + 0 + 0.446 + 0$ $= a + 0.446$
1	$a + 3.184 + 0 + 0$ $= a + 3.184$	$a + 3.184 + 0.446 - 2.552$ $= a + 1.078$

- effect of `dclox` when `dneo` absent = 0.446 (OR = 1.56),
- effect of `dneo` when `dclox` absent = 3.184 (OR = 24.1),
- effect of `dclox` when `dneo` present = -2.106 (OR = 0.122),
- effect of `dneo` when `dclox` present = 0.632 (OR = 1.88),
- “added effect” of both products simultaneously = -2.552 .

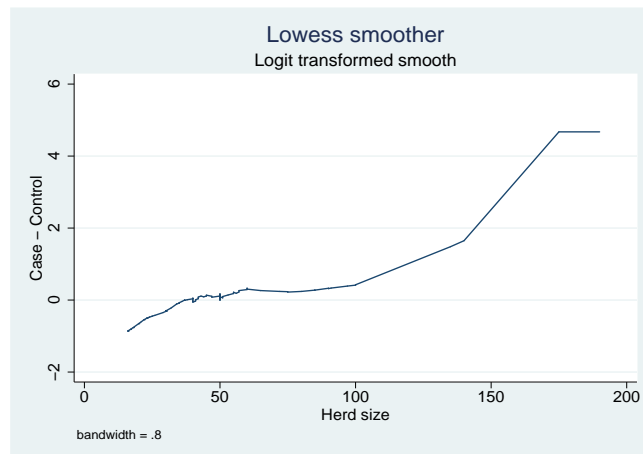
EVALUATING LINEARITY BY PLOTS

More difficult than in linear regression (!):

- less information in binary data
⇒ simple scatterplots often useless with continuous predictor; illustration for `numcow`:



- residuals of little use without replication/grouping (next lecture); `numcow` has almost no replication,
- new tool³: smoothed scatterplots on logit scale:



- * bandwidth=0.8 ~ 80% of points included in weighted average,
- * beware: smoother may be noisy towards ends of data range,
- * interpretation: linear up to ≈ 60 , then flat up to ≈ 100 .

³ For simple associations only; no multivariable counterpart exists.

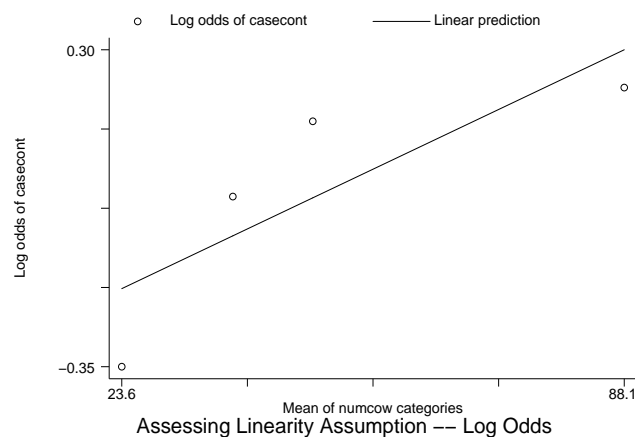
EVALUATING LINEARITY BY CATEGORIZATION

Same as in linear regression:

(but more important here because of less alternatives)⁴

- divide predictor's range into a few intervals⁵ based on cut-points with biological meaning or corresponding roughly to relevant percentiles,
- fit model with categorical (ordinal) predictor, and assess whether estimates follow a linear pattern.

Illustration with 4 intervals for `numcow` (univariate):



	Interval			Data			Estimates	
	min	max	mean	nobs	prop	logit	$\hat{\beta}$	SE
1	16	30	23.6	29	0.41	-0.35	0	—
2	32	41	37.9	26	0.50	0.00	0.348	0.54
3	42	53	48.2	26	0.54	0.15	0.502	0.54
4	55	190	88.1	27	0.56	0.22	0.571	0.54

- curve non-linear (but non-significant estimates),
- created with `lintrend` and `egen cut` commands.

⁴ Idea applies to both simple and multivariable logistic regression models.

⁵ It is often useful to try some different numbers of categories.

EVALUATING LINEARITY BY POLYNOMIALS

- entirely same methods⁶ as for linear models, both for simple polynomials and advanced polynomials (see do-file),
 - construct predictors corresponding to desired model form, and assess their significance,
 - illustrated by quadratic term for `numcow` (univariate):

Coef.	Linear polynomial			Quadratic polynomial		
	Estim.	SE	<i>P</i>	Estim.	SE	<i>P</i>
interc.	-0.71	.41	–	-0.34	.76	–
<code>numcow</code>	0.015	.008	0.056	0.001	.026	0.97
<code>numcow</code> ²	–	–	–	0.000098	.00018	0.59

- * no significance for quadratic term,
- * note variable values for intercept and linear term,
- * centering of `numcow` reduces high collinearity (but not a serious problem here).

Summary of analyses for linearity of `numcow`:

- indications of non-linearity (categorized version, smoothed scatterplot),
 - no significance for non-linear model (though close with advanced methods, see do-file),
- ⇒ simple linear modelling seems preferable (any effect is weak, and `numcow` drops out quickly in multivariable models anyway).

⁶ Applicable to both simple and multivariable logistic regression models.

MODEL/VARIABLE SELECTION IN LOGISTIC MODELS

- Main tool: statistical tests of nested models (only),
- Supplementary tools: measures of model fit adjusted for no. of parameters,
 - * AIC statistic⁷: general for likelihood-based inference, and preferable to BIC^{8,9}
 - * R²-type statistics exist for logistic regression but not recommended (difficult to interpret),
 - * used for overview and “informal” model choice; also maybe to compare non-nested models (if no nesting possible),
 - * should (in my view) not replace tests between nested models,
- Automated procedures (forward/backward/stepwise): as in linear models (same advantages/drawbacks), here based on Wald tests,
- Initial screening of (a large number of) predictors at liberal P ,
- Recommendation: manual selection among models built upon consideration of causal diagram and effects in data.

Illustration: dropping `dclox` from model (`dneo##dclox,dcpct,dbarn2`):

Model	$2 \ln L$	AIC	BIC	G^2	df	P
<code>dneo##dclox,dcpct,dbarn2</code>	-97.31	109.31	125.40	—	—	—
<code>dneo,dcpct,dbarn2</code>	-107.25	115.25	125.98	9.95	2	0.007

- quite strong significance of `dclox` (despite non-significant main effect and weakly significant interaction).

⁷ Akaike’s Information Criterion (AIC): computed as $-2 \ln L + 2 \cdot \# \text{param.}$

⁸ Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC): computed as $-2 \ln L + \ln(n) \cdot \# \text{param.}$, where n = no. of obs.; being developed within the Bayesian framework, its guidelines are less (little?) useful in classical statistics.

⁹ For both AIC and BIC, the sign is unimportant, but smaller/lower values correspond to “better” models, e.g. $1.2 < 3.5$, or $-5.3 < -2.5$.

MORE ABOUT THE AIC AND BIC

The “best” model selection statistic. . .

- people have very different opinions about this, sometimes tending to “semi-religious” convictions,
- preferences may depend on general statistical approach (Bayesian vs. classical/frequentist) and proposed use (e.g., as a guidance or as a definitive model selection tool),
- AIC and BIC are both based on the likelihood function with (different) penalties for the no. of observations,
 - * “best AIC” is more liberal (\Rightarrow larger models) than LR-tests for small df (up till df=7), more conservative (\Rightarrow smaller models) for large df,
 - * “best BIC” is very conservative (\Rightarrow small models),
 - * use only for models with comparable likelihoods (e.g., same data/scale!) – a very common source of errors.

Guidelines for interpreting AIC differences exist:¹⁰

(this is not an endorsement of their use for mechanical model selection!)

	AIC ₂ –AIC ₁	level of support for Model 2
Model 1 has	0 – 2	substantial
lower (better)	4 – 7	considerably less
AIC	> 10	essentially none

¹⁰ Burnham and Anderson 2002, *Model Selection and Multimodel Inference: a Practical Information-Theoretic Approach*, 2nd ed., p. 170.

PRESENTATION OF CATEGORICAL PREDICTOR EFFECTS

Things to consider in linear/logistic models when presenting results for a categorical (> 2 categories) predictor:

- unless pre-determined hypotheses exist, the overall P -value (for H_0 : equal effects across all categories) should be presented and used for discussion,
- for significant or “interesting” predictors, estimates with SE or CI should be shown in one of two possible layouts:
 - * differences to a “reference” (or “baseline”) category: the typical format of software packages when a particular parametrization has been selected (e.g., `regress` and `logit`),
 - * estimates for all categories with suitably defined (and reported) averaging across or values set for all other predictors,
- estimates should be backtransformed as needed (e.g., values may be given both as coefficients on logit scale and as ORs),
- unless pre-determined hypotheses exist, pairwise comparisons should be conducted between *all* category pairs¹¹,
 - * adjusted for multiple comparisons if many categories are present and strict overall significance is required, otherwise unadjusted,
 - * many methods for adjustment for multiple comparisons exist¹²; the simplest and most flexible is the Bonferroni method: divide the significance level (0.05) by the number of comparisons (m) or multiply each P -value by m .
- results of pairwise comparisons may be reported (P -values) or indicated by letter coding¹³.

¹¹ Not only for comparisons with a reference category.

¹² To be discussed in more detail in VHM 802.

¹³ Most common system: two categories with the same letter indicated are not significantly different.