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Statistics: a data science for the 21st century

Peter J. Diggle, *Lancaster University, UK*

The rise of data science could be seen as a potential threat to the long-term status of the statistics discipline. I first argue that, although there is a threat, there is also a much greater opportunity to re-emphasize the universal relevance of statistical method to the interpretation of data, and I give a short historical outline of the increasingly important links between statistics and information technology. The core of the paper is a summary of several recent research projects, through which I hope to demonstrate that statistics makes an essential, but incomplete, contribution to the emerging field of 'electronic health' research, sometimes also called 'health informatics'. Finally, I offer personal thoughts on how statistics might best be organized in a research-led university, and on what we should teach our students.