Discrete probability distributions

January 21, 2013

Random Variables

- 1. Events are not very convenient to use.
- 2. In a clinical trial of certain new treatment, we may be interested in the proportion of patients cured.
- 3. We are interested in some functions of the outcome of an experiment.
- 4. Random variables: A real valued function defined on sample space. A numeric function that assigns probabilities to different events in a sample space.
- 5. Example: New drugs have been introduced to bring hypertension under control. Suppose a physician agrees to use a new antihypertensive drug on a trial basis on the first 4 untreated hypertensives she encounters, before deciding whether to adopt the drug for routine use. Let X = the number of patients out of 4 who are brought under control. Then X is a random variable, which takes on the values 0, 1, 2, 3, 4. We can use expressions $X = 0, X = 3, X > 0, \ldots$ to represent events.
- 6. Example: Flip a coin three times and record the flips. Then S = HHH, HHT, HTH, THH, HTT, THT, TTH, TTT. Define a function X on S by X(s) = the # of heads in the three flips. So X(HHH) = 3, X(HTT) = 1, X(THT) = 1, and X(TTT) = 0. The range of the random variable X is $\{0, 1, 2, 3\}$. P(X=0) + P(X=1) + P(X=2) + P(X=3) = 1/8 + 3/8 + 3/8 + 1/8 = 1
- 7. Discrete random variables: A random variable for which there exists a discrete set of values with specified probabilities. A random variable is discrete if its range is finite or countably infinite. Countably infinite it is possible to make a list of the elements even though they are infinite. For instance the set of positive even numbers is countably infinite: 2, 4, 6, 8,. The set of positive numbers of no more than two decimal digits is countably infinite: $0.01, 0.02, \ldots, 0.99, 1.00, 1.01, \ldots$ An interval like [0, 1] is uncountably infinite; it is impossible to make a list even an infinite list of the real numbers between zero and one.

Probability Mass function

1. Given a discrete random variable X, the associated probability mass function is defined as P(X = r) for all values of r that have positive probability. It is also called the probability distribution.

- 2. Any value of the function is between 0 and 1 $0 < P(X = r) \le 1$.
- 3. The sum of the probability of all possible values of X is 1. $\sum_{allr} P(X = r) = 1$.
- 4. Ex. Hypertension Suppose from previous experience with a drug, the drug company expects that for any clinical practice the probability that 0 patients out of 4 will be brought under control is .008, 1 patient out of 4 is .076, 2 patient out of 4 is .265, 3 patients out of 4 is .411, and all patients is .240. This probability mass function can be displayed in the table below.

Table L. uelaur	pie 1: default
-----------------	----------------

r	0	1	2	3	4
P(X=r)	0.008	0.076	0.265	0.411	0.240



Expected Value

1. Expected value of X is a weighted average of the possible values that X can take on, each value being weighted by the probability that X assumes it. $E(X) = \mu =$ $\sum_{all x} xp(X = x)$ Expected value is what one should expect if the experiment is repeated many times. $E(f(X)) = \sum_{all x} f(x)P(X = x)$

2. Find the expected value for the random variable in hypertension example. P(0) = .008, P(1) = .076, P(2) = .265, P(3) = .411, P(4) = .240. E(X) = 0(.008) + 1(.076) + 2(.265) + 3(.411) + 4(.240) = 2.8

Variance

- 1. Sometimes, the expected value of a random variable X is not informative enough for decision making.
- 2. Definition: If X is random variable with mean μ , then the variance of X, denoted by Var(X), is defined by $Var(X) = \sigma^2 = E[(X \mu)^2] = \sum_{i=1}^{\infty} (x_i \mu)^2 P(X = x_i)$
- 3. Relation: $Var(X) = E(X^2) E(X)^2$
- 4. Example: Probability mass function for the number of episodes of otitis media in the first 2 years of life:

Table 2: default

r	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
P(X=r)	0.129	0.264	271	0.185	0.095	0.039	0.017

5. E(X) = 2.038, V(X) = 1.967.

Permutations

- 1. The number of permutations of n things taken k at a time is $P_k^n = n(n-1) \times \ldots \times (n-k+1) = n!/(n-k)!$ It represents the number of ways of selecting k items out of n, where the order of selection is important.
- 2. Ex. Suppose 3 diseased people and 6 eligible controls live in the same community. How many ways are there of selecting three controls? $P_3^6 = 6 \times 5 \times 4 = 120$

Combinations

- 1. The number of combinations of n things taken k at a time is $\binom{n}{k} = \frac{n!}{k!(n-k)!}$
- 2. It represents the number of ways of selecting k items out of n, where the order of selection is not important.

Bernoulli Random variable

- 1. Outcomes of an experiment can be classified as either positive or negative, success or failure...
- 2. If we let X = 1 when the outcome is a positive and X = 0 when it is a negative, we can have the following pmf:
- 3. p(0) = 1-p, p(1) = p, where p is the probability that the outcome is a positive.
- 4. If a random variable has the above pmf, it is a Bernoulli random variable.
- 5. Example: Ex. Infectious Disease One of the most common laboratory tests performed on any routine medical examination is a blood count. The two main aspects to a blood count are (1) counting the number of white blood cells (the white count) and (2) differentiating white blood cells that do exist into five categories namely, neutrophils, lymphocytes, monocytes, eosinophils, and basophils (the differential). Here we look at the number of neutrophils. What is the probability that any 2 cells out of 5 will be neutrophils, given the probability that any one cell is a neutrophil is .6? We can list all the possible outcomes with 2 cells being neutrophils, where x represents a neutrophil and o as others: xxooo, xoxoo, xooxo, xoxoo, oxxoo, oxxoo, oxxoo, ooxxo, ooxx There are totally 5 choose 2 ways of selecting 2 cells to be neutrophils out of 5 cells. The probability of each outcome is (.6)2(.4)3 = .023 The probability of seeing 2 neutrophils out of 5 is 10(.023) = 0.23.

Binomial Random variable

- 1. If we perform n Bernoulli trials and let X represent the number of positives that occur in the n trials, then X is a binomial random variable with parameter (n, p).
- 2. The pmf of a binomial random variable with parameter (n, p) is

$$p(i) = \binom{n}{i} p^i (1-p)^{n-i}$$

3. Ex. What is the probability of obtaining 2 boys out of 5 children if the probability of a boy is .51 at each birth and the sexes of successive children are considered independent random variables?

$$P(X=2) = {\binom{5}{2}} (0.51)^2 (0.49)^3 = 0.306$$

4. E(X) = np, Var(X) = np(1-p).

Binomial Distribution



Poisson distribution

- 1. Poisson distribution is widely used in statistics for modeling rare events.
- 2. Ex. Infectious Disease The number of deaths attributed to typhoid fever over a long period of time, for example, 1 year, follow a Poisson distribution if:
 - (a) The probability of a new death from typhoid fever in any one day is very small.
 - (b) The number of cases reported in any two distinct periods of time are independent random variables.
- 3. Ex. Rare events occurring on a surface area. The distribution of number of bacterial colonies growing on an agar plate. The number of bacterial colonies over the entire agar plate follow a Poisson distribution if we assume:
 - (a) The probability of finding any bacterial colonies in a small area is very small.
 - (b) The events of finding bacterial colonies at any two areas are independent.
- 4. The probability of k events in a time period t for a Poisson random variable with parameter μ is

$$P(X=k) = e^{-\mu} \frac{\mu^k}{k!},$$

where $\mu = \lambda t$.

- 5. Parameter λ represents expected number of events per unit time.
- 6. Parameter μ represents expected number of events over time period t.
- 7. Difference between Binomial and Poisson distribution
 - (a) There are a finite number of trials n in Binomial distribution
 - (b) The number of events can be infinite for Poisson distribution
- 8. $E(X) = \mu, Var(X) = \mu$.

Infectious disease example

1. Ex. Infectious Disease Consider the typhoid-fever example. Suppose the number of deaths from typhoid fever over a 1-year period is Poisson distributed with parameter $\mu = 4.6$. What is the probability distribution of the number of deaths over a 6-month period?



Let X be the number of deaths in 6 months. Because $\mu = 4.6, t = 1$ year, it follows that $\lambda = 4.6$ deaths per year. For a 6-month period we have $\lambda = 4.6$ deaths per year, t = .5 year. $\mu = 2.3$.

$$P(X=k) = e^{-2.3} \frac{2.3^k}{k!}$$

and P(X > 5) = 1 - (P(X = 0 + P(X = 1) + P(X = 2) + P(X = 3) + P(X = 4 + P(X = 5)) = 0.030

2. Ex. If $A = 100 \, cm^2$ and $\lambda = .02$ colonies per cm^2 , calculate the probability distribution of the number of bacterial colonies. We have $\mu = \lambda A = 100(0.2) = 2$. Let X = number of colonies. Then

$$P(X=k) = e^{-2}\frac{2^k}{k!}$$

P(X > 5) = 0.053.

3. Ex. Infectious Disease: The number of deaths attributable to polio during the years 1968-1976 is given in the following table. Based on this data set, can we use Poisson distribution to model the number of deaths from polio? The sample mean is 11.3

	Table	3:	defau	lt
--	-------	----	-------	----

Year	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76
# deaths	24	13	7	18	2	10	3	9	16

and the variance is 51.5. The Poisson distribution will not fit here because the mean and variance are too different.

Cumulative distribution function

- 1. Every random variable X also has an associated cumulative distribution function defined on the real numbers by $F(x) = P(X \le x)$. ?
- 2. Every cdf is an increasing function. Its limit at negative infinity (to the left) is 0 and its limit at positive infinity (to the right) is 1.
- 3. Once you know the cdf, you can easily find almost any probability that interests you. If the random variable X is discrete, then the cdf is a step function.

