Mathematics for Computer Science
MIT 6.042J/18.062J

Probabilistic Diagnosis

99% accurate TB testing

A great-sounding diagnostic test for TB:

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A great-sounding diagnostic test for TB: if you have TB the test is guaranteed to detect it. If you don't have TB, the test says so 99% of the time. Your doctor gives you the test, and it says you have TB!

99% accurate TB testing

test says TB!

TB is a serious disease and the test is at least 99% accurate. How worried should you be? What is the probability that you actually have TB?

Do you have TB?

What is the probability that you have TB given that a 99% accurate says you do?

$$\Pr[TB \mid \quad + \quad] = ?$$

"+" for [test positive]

Do you have TB?

$$\Pr[+ \mid TB] = 1$$

$$\Pr[+ \mid \text{not } TB] = \frac{1}{100}$$

false positive rate only 1%

Do you have TB?

$$\Pr[TB \mid +] = \frac{\Pr[TB \text{ AND } +]}{\Pr[+]}$$

$$= 1 \cdot \frac{\Pr[+ \mid TB] \cdot \Pr[TB]}{\Pr[+]}$$

Do you have TB?

$$\Pr[TB \mid +] = \frac{\Pr[TB \text{ AND } +]}{\Pr[+]}$$

$$= \frac{\Pr[TB]}{\Pr[+]}$$

You do or you don't

$$\Pr[+] =$$

Total Probability Rule

You do or you don't

$$\Pr[+] = \Pr[+ \mid TB] \cdot \Pr[TB] + \Pr[+ \mid \text{not } TB] \cdot \Pr[\text{not } TB]$$

Total Probability Rule

You do or you don't

$$\Pr[+] = \Pr[+ \mid TB] \cdot \Pr[TB] + \Pr[+ \mid \text{not } TB] \cdot \Pr[\text{not } TB]$$

$$= \quad 1 \quad \cdot \Pr[TB] + \quad \frac{1}{100} \quad \cdot \Pr[\text{not } TB]$$

You do or you don't

$$\Pr[+] = \Pr[+ \mid TB] \cdot \Pr[TB] + \Pr[+ \mid \text{not } TB] \cdot \Pr[\text{not } TB]$$

$$= \quad 1 \quad \cdot \Pr[TB] + \quad \frac{1}{100} \quad \cdot (1 - \Pr[TB])$$

Probability of Testing Positive

$$\Pr[+] = \Pr[+ \mid TB] \cdot \Pr[TB] + \Pr[+ \mid \text{not } TB] \cdot \Pr[\text{not } TB]$$

$$= \frac{99}{100} \Pr[TB] + \frac{1}{100}$$

Do you have TB?

$$\Pr[TB \mid +] = \frac{\Pr[TB]}{\Pr[+]}$$

$$= \frac{\Pr[TB]}{\frac{99}{100} \Pr[TB] + \frac{1}{100}}$$

Do you have TB?

$$\Pr[TB \mid +] = \frac{\Pr[TB]}{\Pr[+]}$$

$$= \frac{100\Pr[TB]}{99\Pr[TB]+1}$$

What is $\Pr[TB]$?

11,000 TB cases reported

CDC got reports of 11,000 cases of TB in US in 2011.
Will be lots of unreported.
So estimate:

$$\Pr[TB] \approx \frac{1}{10,000}$$

Do you have TB?

$$\Pr[TB \mid +] = \frac{100\Pr[TB]}{99\Pr[TB]+1}$$

$$\approx \frac{\frac{100}{10000}}{\frac{99}{10000}+1} \approx \frac{1}{100}$$

Unlikely you have TB

Because of relatively high false positive rate (1%) compared to TB rate (0.01%), chance of having TB remains small (1%)!

Unlikely you have TB

99% accurate test is not so good here.

A "more accurate" test

99% accurate test is not so good here. In fact, there's a trivial test that is 99.99% accurate:

always say "No TB"

Bayes Rule

$$\Pr[TB \mid +] = \frac{\Pr[+ \mid TB] \cdot \Pr[TB]}{\Pr[+]}$$

$$\Pr[B \mid A] = \frac{\Pr[A \mid B] \cdot \Pr[B]}{\Pr[A]}$$

99% accuracy still useful

99% accurate test did increase your probability of TB 100 times.

99% accuracy still useful

99% accurate test did increase your probability of TB 100 times. If you only had 5M medicine doses for a population of 350M, whom should you medicate?

99% accuracy still useful

Medicate the 3.5M who test positive, and you're likely to cure nearly all the cases.

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