Statistics/English 332 Worksheet
Health Care in the USA

The health care reform bill has been passed by the US Senate. The state of health care in the United States has been a subject of debate for many years now. It was a big issue in the election last year, and the discussion intensified over the summer about a massive over-haul of the health care system. One of the frustrating things about the news reports is that there is very little real information on what the problems are and how the health care reform bill is trying to address them. So we've decided that this is a good topic for this class.

We have pulled data from the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey conducted by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: http://www.meps.ahrq.gov/mepsweb/ . The data was collected by taking a panel survey: every year a sample of about 30000 US citizens is taken and information such as expenditure on health care, in different categories including dentist, doctors visits, emergency room, and demographics such as gender, age, insurance coverage, income is collected for the year. The survey began in 1996 and data is available online through 2006.

We will examine a subset of this data. The data contains means of total expenditure by gender, age, insurance status and income. We would like you to decide on a question that interests you about this data, make a plot using JMP or excel, polish this plot in Adobe Illustrator. **We'd like you to email your final plot (pdf format) to us by the end of the lab period, with a paragraph explaining the question that you chose, and how your plot helps you to answer the question.**

Possible questions might be "Have health care expenditures increased over the time period?", "Do women spend more on health than men?", "Do people with insurance spend more on health care than those without?"

Here's additional explanation of the categories:

Age: -1 missing
0 0-9 years
1 10-19 years
2 20-29 years
.....

Income: -1 negative income for that year, such as business loss
0 $0-$10,000
1 $10-$20,000
...
8 above $80,000

Perceived Health Status: 1 Excellent 3 Good 5 Poor
2 Very Good 4 Fair