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The median of an exponential family and the normal law

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Abstract

Let P be a probability on the real line generating a natural exponential family $(P_t)_{t \in \mathbb{R}}$. We show that the property that t is a median of P_t for all t characterizes P as the standard Gaussian law N(0, 1).

KEYWORDS: Characterization of the normal laws, real exponential families, median of a distribution, Choquet-Deny equation.

MSC2010 CLASSIFICATION: 62E10, 60E05, 45E10.

1 Introduction

Let P be a probability on the real line and assume that

$$L(t) = \int_{-\infty}^{+\infty} e^{tx} P(dx) < \infty \quad \text{for } t \in \mathbb{R}.$$
 (1)

Such a probability generates the natural exponential family

$$\mathcal{F}_P = \{ P_t(\mathrm{d}x) = \frac{\mathrm{e}^{tx}}{L(t)} P(\mathrm{d}x), \ t \in \mathbb{R} \}.$$

Then it might happen that the natural parameter t of \mathcal{F}_P is always a median of P_t , in the sense of

$$P_t((-\infty,t)) \le \frac{1}{2} \le P_t((-\infty,t]) \quad \text{for } t \in \mathbb{R}.$$
(2)

In the sequel we denote by \mathcal{P} the set of probabilities P such that (1) and (2) are fulfilled. A noteworthy example of an element of \mathcal{P} is the standard normal

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