

Chronic Disease

Assignment Description:

The fellow will be supervised by Dr. Haggard, an expert in public health informatics and reporting, and under the direct mentorship of, and working daily with, Noell Stone, MPH, an epidemiologist and director of the Morbidity Surveillance Program. The primary and secondary mentors are experienced public health practitioners who are willing and able to guide the fellow through all phases of potential projects and the full fellowship experience. Many other experienced epidemiologists and public health practitioners will be available to the fellow.

Santa Fe, the New Mexico state capitol, is a small city in the northern part of the state and is located 60 miles north of Albuquerque (our largest city). New Mexico is a beautiful state with lots of outdoor recreational activities including skiing, hiking, mountain biking and white-water rafting.

The placement would entail working with both the Morbidity Surveillance Program (MSP) and Community Health Assessment Program (CHAP) located in the New Mexico Department of Health Epidemiology and Response Division (NMDOH-ERD). The goals of these programs are complementary and will provide a unique and supportive home for a CSTE Fellow. The Fellow will have access to Emergency Department Data (NM-ED), Hospital Discharge Data (NMHIDD) and the NM-IBIS Public Health Reporting system. He/she will work on projects that include data quality evaluation, outreach to hospitals and other data submitters, data analysis for policy and program uses, and will work in an environment that encourages innovation and teamwork.

The MSP and CHAP programs are part of a larger effort to support evidence-based public health decision making and data reporting within our state. The MSP, under the direction of Noell Stone, is charged with the collection, review and reporting for the NMHIDD and ED datasets, and works with CHAP to combine these data with data from non-federal facilities including the Indian Health Service hospitals. Within the MSP is the Race and Ethnicity Data Project, an R-01 funded by the Agency of Healthcare Research and Quality, which expands these efforts not only to archiving and using NMHIDD and ED data, but also to improve the timeliness, completeness and quality of race/ethnicity and tribal information for use in health disparities assessment. NM-IBIS, under the umbrella of CHAP and directed by Dr. Lois Haggard, is a web-based public reporting tool that includes community health assessment indicators such as injury and infectious disease, mortality data by New Mexico's 109 'Small Areas' and dynamic query maps. Queries on the following datasets are available or are in process: birth and death certificates, infectious disease, population estimates and health surveys such as the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) and the Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey (YRRS) cancer incidence.

The CHAP and MSP programs work together to increase the NMDOH's ability to share data with the public, researchers and other data users. Access to these datasets, combined with the opportunity to link them with existing vital statistics and data within the NMDOH and other state agencies, will provide a rich environment in which to develop applied epidemiologic skills. The addition of a CSTE Fellow to the group would allow the programs to collaborate more often, and more closely, with each other, data requestors and the public. The Fellow would participate in NM-IBIS development and expansion, yearly reporting from the NMHIDD and ED datasets and would have the opportunity to influence topic specific and individual analyses according to her/his interests.

Day-to-Day Activities:

Daily activities include participating in meetings, conference calls, weekly meetings with mentors and working on the various analysis projects. Communication will be in person, by phone, e-mail and/or webinar. Other activities may include collaborating with other epidemiologists in the department for analysis projects and involvement in work groups. The fellow's interest in various work groups can be determined when the fellow begins their experience at the New Mexico Department of Health.

Potential Projects:

Projects could include analyses of:

- Potentially preventable diabetes-related hospital readmissions,
- The use of hospital discharge data to identify preventable hospital acquired infections (HAI),
- The burden of pneumonia on rural health care providers,
- The adequacy of trauma services in the state,
- Neonatal mortality and opiate dependence in mothers and babies,
- An analysis of the influence of misattribution of race and ethnicity on mortality rates when comparing self-report to administrative data.

Preparedness Role

The fellow will have the opportunity to work with the Bureau of Health Emergency Management and learn the policies and protocols during an emergency and will be actively involved in an Epidemiologist Emergency Preparedness Working Group. The goal of this group is to create a protocol to connect all epidemiologists at the state health department during an emergency to facilitate rapid knowledge sharing. This protocol will be used for the epidemiologist assigned to the Department of Operations Center (DOC) when receiving questions during a disease outbreak or other emergency. This group meets monthly and is comprised of members from the Bureau of Health Emergency Management, and regional and program epidemiologists.

Assignment Location: Santa Fe, NM

Primary Mentor: Lois Haggard, PhD
Program Director, Community Health Assessment Program
New Mexico Department of Health

Secondary Mentor: Sue Noell Stone, MPH
Program Director, Morbidity Surveillance Program
New Mexico Department of Health