

Maternal and Child Health

Assignment Description:

Given the wide array of services provided by the Division of Family and Community Services (FCHS) in the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), the research group is involved in a variety of projects. Some programs within FCHS include Children with Special Health Care Needs, Family Planning, Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening, Oral Health, Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT), Newborn Screening follow-up, and WIC. The research projects for these programs range from surveillance to program evaluation. Along with the mentor, the fellow will be involved in designing of the research projects as well as execution and/or review of the results and reports. The researchers in FCHS are housed under the Office of program decision support (OPDS). Much of the work completed in OPDS is through interdisciplinary teams with a strong focus on application and translation of research to practice. The work of OPDS informs policy development and programmatic decision-making. The fellow will have the opportunity to learn how to best present information to engage a broad range of stakeholders, including scientists, policy makers, program staff, and the general public. Staff resources within OPDS and across the agency are vast and include clinicians (MCH nurse consultant, OB/GYN physician) as well Subject Matter Experts (SMEs).

Day-to-Day Activities:

The fellow will be working with a team of researchers and program staff to develop and implement research that can be translated into program policy.

Potential Projects:

The fellow will be responsible for data collection/analysis and interpretation of preconception factors, breastfeeding barriers, and maternal child health disparities in Texas. There are several programs underway focusing on preconception factors in Texas. The type of hospital (e.g. Baby friendly) can influence the chances of breastfeeding which in turn has long term impact on the health and development of the child.

The fellow will have an opportunity to conduct analyses using the large statewide hospital discharge database to answer important public health questions surrounding hospital utilization and charges for children with important birth outcomes such as prematurity and selected newborn screening disorders (e.g., sickle cell disease).

The fellow will also have the opportunity to work with our Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) database spanning the years 2002-2010. Some of the proposed projects include assessing psychological factors (psychological stress, physical abuse and social support), the impact of BMI and gestational diabetes on births outcomes (low birth weight, preterm births), reasons for elective deliveries, and birth outcomes by pregnancy intention.

Preparedness Role:

The Fellow will be expected to participate in any emergency preparedness trainings and/or events as needed.

Assignment Location: Austin, TX

Primary Mentor:

Radhika Nair, PhD
Epidemiologist III- Team Lead, Office of Program Decision Support
Texas Department of State Health Services

Secondary Mentor:

Mark Canfield, PhD
Manager, Birth Defects Epidemiology and Surveillance Branch
Texas Department of State Health Services