

Occupational Health

Assignment Description:

The primary assignment will be to develop and implement occupational health surveillance projects throughout the State for the Illinois Occupational Illness and Injury Prevention Program (IOIIP). IOIIP is a newly funded program that brings together Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health (UIC SPH), state and federal agencies, businesses, labor, and community groups to analyze occupational surveillance data, interpret results, implement interventions, and evaluate intervention effectiveness or impact. The IOIIP works in tandem with the Occupational Disease Registry, located in the IDPH's Office of Planning Policy and Statistics (OPPS), Office of Health Promotion (OHPP), Office of Health Protection (OHP), and the Office of Preparedness and Response (OPR). The optimal Fellow will be an energetic, organized, and creative public health practitioner who wants the challenge of expanding the breadth of occupational injury prevention in a State.

Day-to- Day Activities

The Fellow will participate in activities that will help achieve the fellowship core competency skills, such as the evaluation of surveillance systems to understand the limitations of surveillance data, interpretation of surveillance data, design of an epidemiologic study either using a case control or cohort design to study a health problem, use of statistical software such as Epi info, SAS, or SPSS to analyze and characterize epidemiologic data. The focus will be placed on helping the Fellow interpret findings from epidemiologic studies and recognizing potential sources of bias and/or confounding and interaction. These activities may include, but will not be limited to, occupational health. The Fellow will work as a member of a team during outbreak investigations with epidemiologists in the realms of infectious disease, foodborne illness, cancer, and emergency response. S/he will field calls from the community and be mentored in gathering information and responding to public health questions.

The Fellow will be mentored in data analysis—data cleaning, linkage, descriptive and other analytic techniques-- and preparation of data for dissemination to multiple audiences, including academicians (peer reviewed literature), companies, unions, and low wage workers. The Fellow will work across programs in IDPH such as, OHP, OPR, and OPPS as related to occupational and environmental health issues.

The Fellow will work with mentors from both IDPH and UIC SPH and will be provided an office at each location. S/he will collect the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologist Occupational Health Indicators as a way of becoming familiar with the scope of datasets that inform about occupational illness and injury. S/he will serve as the point person to engage stakeholders, conduct analyses, facilitate prioritization of interventions, and work on implementation of policy initiatives, training, and/or community level education. S/he will develop an agenda and organize at least one stakeholders meeting, facilitating data interpretation and prioritizing interventions based on surveillance results. Depending on the interests of stakeholders and the interests of the Fellow, one to three intervention projects will be developed with a more careful collaboration with one or two stakeholder groups. The Fellow will explore the possibility of statutory reporting of occupational injury sentinels, including amputation, burn, injury fatality, and pesticide injuries.

Potential Projects

The Fellow will be able to identify and take on projects that are of interest to him/her. Potential projects include establishing a protocol for addressing occupational and environmental health requests from the community; collecting, cleaning, and linking of datasets from multiple agencies. Descriptive

data analyses that have been completed could be taken to the intervention phase. For example, IOIPP completed an occupational amputation injury project that showed that the repeat offenders and most severe amputations happened among temporary employment agencies, State agencies, and food manufacturers.

The Fellow could work with the Illinois Department of Labor (IDOL) on a training curriculum and a dissemination scheme to prevent amputation injuries in those sectors. There are ongoing projects to evaluate the potential of doing injury prevention training in community settings, like the Mexican consulate or community centers. The Fellow could develop materials and work with community groups to do training in the community. The Fellow could work on a plan for sharing data and conducting joint investigations between IDPH and U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Agency or between IDPH and IDOL.

Preparedness Role:

The Fellow will be involved in all Emergency Preparedness activities at IDPH and at UIC SPH. S/he will be eligible to take courses on emergency preparedness designed for the public health workforce, participate in training sessions and drills, learn about and manipulate relational databases and their use in Emergency Management and Continuity Planning.

Assignment Location: Chicago, IL

Primary Mentor: Kenneth Soyemi, MD, MPH
Assistant Medical Director
Office of Health Protection
Illinois Department of Public Health

Secondary Mentor: Linda Forst, MD, MPH
Professor and Division Director
University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health