

Chronic Disease

Assignment Description:

The Alaska Native Tumor Registry (ANTR) and the Alaska Native Epidemiology Center (Epi Center) propose mentoring a Chronic Disease fellow at the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium.

Cancer was once a rare occurrence among Alaska Native people (2008 population 130,000), but today, cancer is the leading cause of death. Cancer incidence for several major cancer sites, and for all sites combined among women, exceeds rates for US whites. Alaska Native cancer incidence rates exceed rates of other US racial groups for many cancer sites. The ANTR, supported by the National Cancer Institute, Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results Program, contains information on all cancers diagnosed in Alaska Native people while living in Alaska since 1969. The ANTR is part of the Alaska Native Epi Center. The ANTR conducts ongoing surveillance activities around the state, performs data analysis and reports on cancer status and trends among Alaska Native people. The ANTR responds to data requests through data analysis, reports and presentations to tribal groups. The ANTR has ongoing collaborations with researchers from public health agencies in Anchorage and outside of Alaska. Current projects include working with the CDC Arctic Investigations Program on HPV typing in Alaska Native cervical cancer patients, and H. pylori in gastric cancer patients; the State of Alaska Cancer Registry on disparities in cancer incidence and mortality between race groups; the Mayo Clinic (Rochester) on patterns of care studies, the epidemiology of gastric and intestinal cancers, and in developing protocols for a cancer family history registry and biospecimen banking.

The Epi Center, one of 11 tribal epidemiology centers in the US, was established by the National Indian Health Service Epidemiology Program to assist in improving the health of American Indians and Alaska Natives. The Alaska Epi Center is part of the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC), the largest and most comprehensive tribal health organization in the US. Prior to the establishment of the consortium, the Indian Health Service provided the health care infrastructure and services throughout Alaska to Alaska Native people. ANTHC's vision is that "Alaska Natives are the healthiest people in the world", and the fellow would be helping to reach toward that goal.

The Epi Center provides epidemiologic services to health care providers, tribal health organizations, and others. Services include analyzing data for regional health status profiles of maternal and child health, chronic disease, injury, and health behaviors; technical assistance to the regions, and research. Within the EpiCenter are 6 epidemiologists, 2 data programmer/analysts, a research nurse, a community programs coordinator, two tumor registrars and administrative support staff.

The assignee will have the opportunity to develop research interests in cancer through analyses and interpretation of tumor registry data, preparing reports or manuscripts, and delivering presentations. Opportunities will be made available at the Epi Center or with collaborating organizations to develop the skills required in core competencies. There are potential opportunities to work on other projects within the Epi Center, and with the CDC Arctic Investigations Program (located on our campus), depending on interest.

Fellow's Anticipated Day-to-Day Activities

Activities may include:

- Develop a research question that can be answered from the existing cancer database.
- Perform a quality control review for validity and completeness of data through use of clinical data
- Evaluate ANTR surveillance system, explore new data sources and develop recommendations
- Perform detailed analyses of cancer incidence data, compare with other populations, interpret and disseminate results
- Present data and interpretation of analyses to tribal groups and other audiences
- Research medical records for additional information not collected by the tumor registry on patients or their cancer for a research topic of interest
- Perform data analysis in response to technical requests from providers, tribal members

Potential Projects:

- Evaluation of surveillance activities for improvements in case finding, data linkages, patient follow-up.
- Perform data analysis for a specific cancer site of importance; may include demographic and cancer descriptions, rate calculations, odds ratio comparisons, trend analysis, survival analysis, multivariate analysis or other.
- Develop a protocol for collecting family history among cancer patients
- Analyze cancer incidence and mortality trends by race and region.
- Link cancer registry data with medical record information and/or other chronic disease registry data to identify co-morbidities frequently associated with cancer
- Develop methodology to determine the quality of life 2 months, 6months and 12 months post cancer treatment, and implement study.
- Develop collaborative project with other SEER cancer registries
- Develop materials for lay audiences for understanding cancer and risk factors

Fellows Role in Emergency Preparedness

A variety of hazards- earthquakes, floods, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, avalanches, storms, wildfires, and epidemics have occurred in Alaska in recent years. In addition, Alaska's oil and natural gas industries are considered to be at risk from terrorist attack. The ANTHC department partners with state, federal, military, and other agencies to coordinate emergency response plans for Alaska. The fellow will have the opportunity to work with either the ANTHC Emergency Management Department in emergency preparedness assistance and training programs in communities to help the Alaska Tribal Health System (ATHS) prepare for disasters and emergencies (Dr. Michael Bradley), or with the state of Alaska state Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management workgroup. The fellow will also have the opportunity to work with the Alaska State Division of Public Health in an outbreak investigation (Dr. Joe McLaughlin, Alaska State Epidemiologist).

Anchorage is a community of 279,000 people located on a stunningly beautiful coastline surrounded by several mountain ranges. The city and area parks offer many outdoor recreational opportunities including salmon fishing, skiing, biking, kayaking, camping and hiking. Working at the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium provides an opportunity for learning about the rich and diverse culture of Alaska Native people, and of particular challenges to improving health status in this population. The

fellow will benefit by interacting with Alaska Natives and their supporters through presentations and meetings

Assignment Location: Anchorage, AK

Primary Mentor: Ellen Provost, D.O., M.P.H.
Director Alaska Native Epidemiology Center
Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium

Secondary Mentor: Janet Kelly, MS, MPH
Cancer Surveillance Director
Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium