

Connecticut TB and STD Program Fellowship

Information about the program area

The Fellowship offers mentoring through the Connecticut Infectious Disease Section working in the Tuberculosis (TB) Control and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) Programs. The TB and STD Programs' responsibilities include developing and providing education to providers, assisting local health departments, working with regional public health programs, developing guidelines, implementing disease surveillance and analyzing data, investigating disease outbreaks, interacting with private and public providers to manage patients, and assisting in the development of public health policy.

The Fellowship provides a variety of practical, hands-on experiences that will expand the Fellow's knowledge and skills in applied epidemiology and public health practice. The projects are collaborative and emphasize preventive interventions, the use of data for decision-making, and building program capacity. Both the TB and STD programs are also involved in projects with programs in the New England region. The Fellow will have an assortment of options to develop and demonstrate core competencies in epidemiologic methods, communication, public health practice, and program evaluation. Opportunities exist to attend and present at state, regional, and national meetings.

Potential projects

Interdisciplinary teams

1) The innovative use of molecular TB genotyping brings together a public health analyst, medical epidemiologist, outreach staff, and a laboratorian to collect, analyze, interpret, and use genotyping and epidemiologic data for the control of disease. The TB Program would like to look at these data in a systematic fashion. The Fellow will also have the opportunity to participate in and present data to a New England-wide working group.

2) The Fellow can be part of a public health initiative to screen, treat, and counsel adolescents for Chlamydia, the most common STD among young women and men. The STD Program needs assistance in designing interventions for post-treatment testing and follow up of adolescents who are tested through various screening programs. The Fellow would provide assistance with data collection and analysis, devising a program for improving follow up, and seeking grants to study what adolescents learned when they were infected concerning risk reduction and did they apply that knowledge.

3) The Fellow had the opportunity to help plan and coordinate TB and STD educational efforts in the state and the New England region.

Contact and Outbreak field investigations

4) The TB Program assists local health departments in conducting public health investigations in the community and periodically in congregate settings (e.g. prisons). The Program would like to evaluate these investigations with reports to the TB Program manger and director of the Infectious Disease Section. The Fellow will acquire cultural

awareness and sensitivity as the majority of patients are from other countries and gain an understanding of HIPPA issues.

5) The STD Program is investigating syphilis transmission among gay men, 40% of whom are HIV infected. This is an excellent opportunity for a Fellow to apply a diversity of epidemiologic methods to describe the epidemiology and risk factors related to this outbreak. Fellows can be involved in partner notification, developing a social network analysis to display patterns of transmission especially among HIV-infected men, and take the lead on creating prevention messages. It would be very helpful to the STD Program for the Fellow to prepare recommendations for prevention among persons who persist in engaging in high-risk sex.

Data collection and analysis

6) The TB Control Program conducts supplemental surveillance in children and foreign-born persons. An opportunity exists to analyze these data and make recommendations to the Program. The Fellow would design the analysis and create a surveillance report and special reports. Previous analyses and publications include TB in the foreign born and outcomes from contact investigations.

7) The TB and STD Programs need assistance in temporal and spatial trends analysis of surveillance to define the changing patterns of TB and STD transmission.

Public Health Law

8) The TB Program periodically is asked by local health departments to find residence for patients who require isolation. As part of a regional and national effort to define the best legal and public health practices involving isolation, the Fellow will investigate existing Connecticut State law related to quarantine and isolation, possibly seek an opinion from the State Attorney General on isolation of patients in a facility in another state, and make recommendations on the use and costs involved in out-of-state isolation.

Program evaluation

9) The TB Program wishes to embark on an evaluation of programmatic outcomes such as the completion of therapy for TB cases (Healthy People 2010 Objective). This evaluation will guide the Program on where improvements need to be made and findings will be reported to CDC.

State emergency preparedness plan

10) Possible activities may include helping to determine how to incorporate lessons learned from TB outbreak investigations into bioterrorism/emerging pathogen response protocols, and how to plan for continuity of program operations in an emergency. Fellows may participate in a table top exercise.

Assignment location: Hartford, CT

Primary Mentor: Mark Lobato, MD
New England TB Consultant, Division of Tuberculosis

Advanced Degree: Elimination, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
MD, University of California, San Francisco (1989)

Secondary Mentor: Lynn Sosa
Medical Epidemiologist, Infectious Disease Section
Advanced Degrees: MD, MA Harvard Medical School (2002)

Secondary Mentor: Heidi Jenkins
Program Director, TB and STD Control Programs
Advanced Degrees: BA