

The Bureau of Environmental Health Assessment (BEHA) is one of nine bureaus at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH). BEHA has six major programs: Environmental Epidemiology Program, Environmental Toxicology Program, Indoor Air Quality/Emergency Response Program, Community Assessment Program, Environmental Health Education and Outreach Program, and the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program. The Fellow will be assigned to the Environmental Epidemiology Program. The principal responsibility of the Fellow will be the development of a surveillance system for lupus in Boston. The Fellow will work closely with a team of medical and public health professionals in preparing a scientific protocol where case ascertainment procedures are delineated, compiling the data, and preparing a report on the surveillance data. This effort is one of three pilot demonstration projects funded by CDC's new national Environmental Public Health Tracking (Surveillance) initiative. We expect that the Fellow will also have an opportunity to assist on other tracking or epidemiology projects in the Bureau, such as the new surveillance efforts on developmental disabilities, pediatric asthma, and multiple sclerosis/amyotrophic lateral sclerosis.

Most of the Bureau's projects are interdisciplinary efforts including professionals from outside MDPH and from within different BEHA programs. For example, each of the surveillance projects include nurses or other professionals who are collecting data in the field, and physicians who are reviewing the data collected and apply case definitions. In addition, BEHA projects routinely include a Community Advisory Group. The lupus project has two existing advisory groups, one comprising physicians from major Boston hospitals, MDPH legal staff, and hospital medical records staff. A second committee comprises community representatives. The Fellow will have the opportunity to participate with the advisory groups, as well as the MDPH and non-MDPH project team members regarding study/surveillance design, data interpretation, and risk communication issues.

The Fellow's day-to-day activities will include (1) participation in meetings, including weekly meetings with the primary supervisor to discuss the past week's activities and determine the current week's workplan, bi-weekly Environmental Epidemiology Program staff meetings, bi-weekly meetings with the lupus project team, off-site meetings with health professionals on lupus protocol and data collection issues, bi-monthly meetings with the lupus advisory committees, participation in team meetings for other Bureau projects; (2) carrying out the tasks assigned in the lupus workplan; (3) gaining experience using statistical and GIS software; (4) assisting Epidemiology staff in providing technical assistance to other Programs; and (5) the development of public documents describing meeting summaries, the scientific justification of methods, the protection of privacy, and data interpretation/risk communication. The Fellow will have daily interaction with the primary supervisor.

The Fellow will conduct an evaluation of their project, developing a surveillance system for lupus in Boston. This evaluation will be consistent with the CDC's "Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health" and/or CDC's guidance on "Updated Guidelines for Evaluating Public Health Surveillance Systems" and will include an evaluation of lessons learned from the proposed project.

The Fellow will participate in meetings related to bioterrorism and emergency preparedness conducted at MDPH. The Assistant Commissioner of MDPH/BEHA, Suzanne K. Condon, co-chairs the Department's risk communication group for bioterrorism and emergency preparedness and has recently been named Acting Director of the Department's Center for Emergency Preparedness. In this role, she works with and oversees staff work related to all EP/BT efforts at MDPH. The Fellow will assist with these activities for the Department.

Assignment Location: Boston, MA

Primary Mentor: Robert S. Knorr, PhD, MPH
Deputy Director for Environmental Epidemiology/State Environmental
Epidemiologist (1989-present)

Advanced Degrees: PhD, University of Pennsylvania, 1986
MPH, university of Minnesota, 1978

Secondary Mentor: Martha Steele, MPH
Deputy Director, Bureau of Environmental Health Assessment (1995-
present)

Advanced Degree: MPH, University of Michigan (1982)