

Occupational Health

The Fellow will be assigned to the Occupational Health Surveillance Program (OHSP) in the Center for Health Information, Statistics, Research and Evaluation, Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH). The overall mission of the Occupational Health Surveillance Program is to promote the health, safety and quality of life of working people in Massachusetts. The program has a broad array of projects that encompass data analysis, program evaluation, and intervention activities. Potential projects and focus areas are described below. Many of these projects provide for flexibility to accommodate the interest and initiative of the Fellow.

- Development of protocols for enhancing the use of statewide case mix data (hospital discharge, emergency department, and outpatient observation data) for occupational injury surveillance. Current areas of interest include musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) in teens and adults, burns, injuries in minority and special populations, and falls in construction.
- Analysis of workers' compensation data. We are currently looking at falls in construction, carpal tunnel syndrome, MSDs, and burns and are exploring the use of these data to evaluate injury rates in public sector workers. A project to merge these data with case mix data to investigate surveillance system capture rates for occupational injuries will commence this year.
- Development of intake forms and protocols for emergency departments to increase awareness, diagnosis, and reporting of work-related asthma and solicit information about associated exposures. Develop project evaluation endpoints for reducing use of emergency departments for asthma exacerbations; promoting earlier diagnosis and treatment; and prevention of occupational asthma.
- Development of administrative and clinical forms for Community Health Centers to promote identification of work-related conditions. The health centers are seeking intranet available materials for clinician and patient education on a variety of subjects—common occupations (e.g., custodian, cosmetologist, nurse's aide) and health outcomes (e.g., MSDs, headache, low-back pain) for low-income, minority and immigrant workers.
- Development of a survey to evaluate under-reporting of sharps injuries among health care workers in Massachusetts as a part of the Massachusetts statewide sharps injury surveillance. This will involve survey design as well as data collection and analysis to better understand the level of under-reporting of sharps injuries in the healthcare industry, particularly among hospital workers.
- The Teens at Work Project will be working on several data and prevention activities in the upcoming year including, linking workers' compensation data with emergency department data, industry specific analyses, analysis of interviews conducted with injured teens, a restaurant industry focus project to reduce the number of injuries to teens in this industry, and updating health education materials to be placed on the web.

As an occupational epidemiologist at OHSP, the Fellow will serve as a member of the team conducting field investigations that are triggered by OHSP's routine sentinel event surveillance of work-related carbon monoxide poisoning, work-related burns, work-related asthma, teen injuries at work, and workplace fatalities. The Fellow will also

collaborate with other programs in MDPH such as the Injury Surveillance Program and the Division of Research and Epidemiology and will have the opportunity to participate in statewide planning efforts and community coalitions, such as Traumatic Brain Injury taskforce, the Massachusetts Asthma Planning Collaborative Initiative, and the Heart Health and Stroke Free Massachusetts partnership. Work will be conducted under the direction of Phillip Hunt, ScD., who is leading the “Massachusetts Fundamental Occupational Health Surveillance Project” designed to develop a model occupational health surveillance program for other states.

The MDPH has the capacity and capability to identify infectious disease outbreaks, including outbreaks caused by the deliberate use of biological agents by terrorists. The Fellow will attend meetings of the Statewide Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Program Advisory Committee and the Hospital Preparedness Planning Committee chaired by Alfred DeMaria, MD, Assistant Commissioner of MDPH. Specifically the Fellow will be trained in the Focus Area B: Epidemiology and Surveillance – disease reporting, vulnerability assessments, exercise epidemiology response, broader definition of surveillance.

Primary Mentor: Letitia K. Davis, ScD, MS
Director, Occupational Health Surveillance Program
(1984-present)

Advanced Degrees: ScD, Harvard School of Public Health (1983)
MS, Harvard School of Public Health (1978)

Secondary Mentor: Phillip R. Hunt, ScD, CIH
Senior Epidemiologist, Occupational Health Surveillance
Program (2004-present)

Advanced degrees: ScD, University of Massachusetts Lowell, 2006
MS, New York University (1983)