

Chronic Disease

The Chronic Disease and Injury (CDI) Section of the North Carolina Division of Public Health (DPH) is committed to providing an exceptional and well-rounded experience for a CDC/CSTE Applied Epidemiology Fellow. We are a national leader in the prevention and control of chronic diseases and have a strong history of hosting CDC Prevention Specialists, CDC interns, and UNC-Chapel Hill students. This assignment will allow a Fellow to develop applied epidemiology competencies under the guidance of two experienced mentors (one an EIS alumna) by engaging in both narrowly-focused and cross-cutting projects in chronic disease epidemiology, with opportunities to gain experience in communicable disease and injury epidemiology and public health preparedness.

One of the Fellow's first projects will be to evaluate a chronic disease surveillance system. Possibilities are: the Child Health Assessment and Monitoring Program (CHAMP), a call-back survey to the BRFSS; the Restaurant Heart Health Survey, a surveillance system of restaurant smoking and healthy food options policies; and the NC Nutrition and Physical Activity Surveillance System of children seen in public health clinics. Choice of surveillance system will depend upon the Fellow's interests.

Other potential chronic disease-related projects include:

1. Assessing potential uses of the new NC-DETECT data, including Emergency Department and EMS data, for chronic disease surveillance.
2. Compiling data from multiple sources on chronic diseases and risk factors among older adults in N.C. and assessing gaps in chronic disease surveillance data for older adults as part of a CDI section-wide initiative.
3. Assisting in implementing a N.C. Chronic Disease Examination Survey (if funded) or (if not funded this year) writing a CDC grant proposal to implement this survey. This survey would include clinical measures from N.C. adults, to provide a much-needed complement to self-report BRFSS data.
4. Conducting detailed analyses of BRFSS data. The CDI Section runs the 2nd largest BRFSS in the nation (>16,000 respondents per year) allowing analyses not possible with smaller sample sizes. Potential projects include examining county-level trends in chronic disease-related indicators; examining trends in racial and socioeconomic disparities in chronic disease-related indicators; examining trends and factors associated with aspirin use for prevention of cardiovascular disease and with rehab after cardiovascular events.
5. Conducting analyses to examine relationships between chronic disease risk factors and conditions among adults and children in the same household through linking CHAMP and BRFSS data.
6. Conducting detailed analyses of physical activity and nutrition-related data from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and the School Health Profiles, including analyses of state-added questions, trends over time, and multivariate analyses.
7. Creating an overarching chronic disease surveillance plan, which would list and characterize current surveillance data, identify gaps, and provide recommendations for filling gaps.

8. Designing survey instruments, gathering and analyzing data from local school districts to determine their emphasis on and persistence with school wellness policies.
9. Evaluating a local physical activity coalition-building efforts, including survey, data collection and analysis to determine coalitions' target populations, reach and impact of interventions.
10. Evaluating a faith-based initiative to build health ministries that develop policies and environments supporting healthy behaviors, including collection and analysis of follow-up data from churches and health professional partners.
11. Writing a State Burden Report on one chronic disease or risk factor.

The mentors will work with the Fellow to choose projects that fit the Fellow's interests and provide solid broad-based experience in applied chronic disease epidemiology. These projects will involve the Fellow with staff from across the Section, including Section leadership. Several of these projects provide the opportunity to present at national conferences and submit manuscripts suitable for peer-reviewed journals. The Fellow will participate in and present work to state advisory boards and task forces and will be mentored in the handling of data and technical assistance requests from the public, legislators, local public health agencies, and the media. Projects in chronic disease topic areas not mentioned above (cancer, asthma, tobacco, etc.) can easily be arranged. Several injury epidemiology project opportunities exist, including analysis of medical examiner records on unintentional poisonings and analysis of emergency department data on traumatic brain injuries, if the Fellow has an interest here.

The Fellow will engage in at least one field investigation with the General Communicable Disease Control Branch. The Fellow will take the three public health preparedness classes required of all DPH staff and will be included in Public Health Preparedness efforts. Some potential public health preparedness projects include analyzing data from post-hurricane community assessments to identify long-term effects on chronic disease and opportunities to be a part of public health response to emergency events like hurricanes.

Assignment Location:	Raleigh, NC
Primary Mentor:	Sara Huston, PhD Cardiovascular Epidemiologist
Advanced Degrees:	PhD, University of Pittsburgh (1993)
Secondary Mentor:	Rosemary Ritzman, PhD, MSN, BS Evaluation and Surveillance Coordinator
Advanced Degrees:	PhD, North Carolina State University (1996) MSN, Duke University (1964)