

This assignment will focus on sexually transmitted disease (STD) epidemiology in New Mexico. New Mexico is currently experiencing a significant increase in infectious syphilis. During 2003 there were 67 primary and secondary syphilis cases and 51 early latent syphilis cases reported in New Mexico, representing respective increases of 42% and 55% over reports in 2002. Until recently, cases had been occurring primarily in Bernalillo County in central New Mexico. We have now experienced large increase in infectious syphilis in southern New Mexico as well as northwestern New Mexico, primarily on the Navajo Reservation and adjacent areas.

The fellow will work under the supervision of the Office of Epidemiology to support the surveillance and response needs of the Infectious Disease (ID) Bureau, specifically in the area of STDs. The fellow will collaborate with the ID Bureau Chief and the STD Program Manager to ensure the optimal management of STD data to influence prevention and control strategies as well as to identify and respond to disease outbreaks. Current capacity in the ID Bureau in this area is limited to support by a part-time contractor who has focused on clean-up of data in the STD Management Information System (STD-MIS) and improvement of reporting from local and district staff.

After arriving in New Mexico, the fellow would spend about one month in orientation and meetings relevant to STD epidemiology in New Mexico. This would include meeting with key public health and epidemiology staff in Santa Fe and around the state. The fellow would also become familiar with the STD epidemiology literature during this time. The fellow would be involved in continuing to improve the quality of STD data in New Mexico. The fellow would develop a protocol for each descriptive or analytic study that would be pursued. The fellow would analyze STD data and describe the burden of STDs in New Mexico through reports, peer-reviewed publications and presentations. The fellow would also learn how to investigate STD outbreaks and then lead these outbreak investigations.

Opportunities abound for inter-disciplinary collaboration on projects in STD surveillance and response. Syphilis outbreaks have continued in the northwest part of the state, in Albuquerque, and in the southwest along the border with Mexico. IHS providers have documented a relationship with HIV transmission in the northwest, prompting collaboration between Albuquerque-based Indian Health Service staff, the Navajo Nation, NMDOH staff at the local, district and central (ID Bureau) levels, local political authorities and community groups, and a CDC Rapid Response Team. The Office's role in this collaboration has been limited to information-sharing by the HIV/AIDS Epidemiology Program and has not included analysis of syphilis data nor participation in outbreak response. A cluster of syphilis cases recently identified in the state's Southwest district, including instances of congenital syphilis, similarly cries out for epidemiological collaboration with medical care providers and public health authorities in Las Cruces, El Paso, and Ciudad Juárez. The Office and the ID Bureau look forward to the participation and leadership of a fellow to strengthen the NMDOH's role in supporting response to outbreaks of this nature. In addition, the fellow could work on hepatitis B and C-focused projects.

The fellow would evaluate the STD surveillance system in New Mexico as an initial project similar using CDC guidelines.

The fellow will also have the opportunity to participate in activities under the New Mexico's Emergency Preparedness Plan. A centralized "Response Team" will interface with Emergency Preparedness epidemiologists placed throughout the state working on surveillance and response, and the fellow would be an integral part of this infrastructure.

Assignment Location: Santa Fe, NM

Primary Mentor: Michael Landen, MD, MPH
Medical Epidemiologist (2000-present)

Advanced Degrees: MD, Bowman Gray School of Medicine (1986)
MPH, University of North Carolina (1993)

Secondary Mentor: Gary L. Simpson, PhD, MD, MPH
Medical Director, Infectious Diseases Bureau (1992-present)

Advanced Degrees: PhD, University of Illinois, Champaign (1973)
MD, Rush Medical College (1974)
MPH, Harvard School of Public Health (1978)