

Chronic Disease/Infectious Disease

Description:

We propose to involve the epidemiology fellow in our Navajo BRFSS survey project. Currently, we have a multi-agency steering committee & 3 workgroups planning this Navajo Nation-wide survey. The workgroups are developing the survey methodology, survey questions and strategies to obtain community & stakeholder support for the survey. (Community support is particularly critical in tribal populations.) During the 2 years this fellow would be stationed here, s/he would be assisting the Navajo Epidemiology Center in the planning and implementation of this important tribal health survey.

The fellow will have the option of being involved in the following critical areas: working with the steering committee (Dr. Klaus is the chair), the methods & budget workgroup (also chaired by Dr. Klaus), the survey development workgroup (if the draft is not yet done), the questionnaire translation (into the Navajo language) workgroup we will soon form, and possibly the community strategy workgroup (which will include obtaining approval from the Navajo Nation Human Research Review Board).

This project has the potential to provide essential public health and survey experience, including working with tribal public health staff (Navajo Division of Health staff), Navajo Area Indian Health Service staff (who are on our committee & workgroups), state health department staff (from Arizona, New Mexico, Utah), tribal communities, faculty from the Navajo college (Dine College), and federal agencies (e.g., CDC's BRFSS program) that are interested in our survey. At the beginning of the 2-year fellowship, the fellow can choose which aspect of the survey project s/he would like to focus on: survey development or translation, community strategy (including our IRB application process), obtaining funding for the survey, for example. As the project progresses, we propose that s/he can become the project coordinator, whose duties can include developing interviewer training, survey pilot testing, researching the best computer-aided interview software for the project, developing the survey database, overseeing data collection, performing data quality checks, and becoming involved in the analysis of the survey data once collected. We are planning to conduct the survey in 2011. Thus, there is a variety of basic epidemiologic activities that this Navajo survey project can offer a fellow over the course of 2 years.

Day-to-Day Activities:

The fellow's daily activities will depend upon which survey-related focus areas s/he chooses to pursue and the stage of the survey project when the fellow arrives.

Day-to-day activities will include:

- a) meetings with the Navajo Epidemiology (NEC) staff, Navajo Division of Health (NDOH) program and executive staff and Navajo BRFSS workgroup members during which NEC and NDOH projects are discussed and planned;
- b) Discussions with NDOH programs regarding special presentations the fellow may provide to NDOH program staff and directors; and
- c) planning and oversight of the Navajo BRFSS survey project.

Such activities will provide multiple opportunities for the fellow to develop the following skills:

- a) Practical experience in developing a health survey, including survey methodology and an IRB application;
- b) Providing technical assistance to tribal public health staff as well as tribal communities (e.g., assistance with community health assessment, interpretation of health information); and
- c) Working with state and federal partners to develop public health capacity within a tribal public health agency.

This is a unique opportunity to work directly with tribal agencies and communities, which will serve to sensitize the fellow to tribal perspectives and the unique challenges that tribes experience.

Potential Projects:

- Participation in an ATSDR-funded uranium health study in Navajo Area, which is expected to begin in late 2010
- Participation in development of a Navajo Nation-wide infectious disease surveillance system
- Participation in development of a Navajo Nation Health Alert Network (HAN), similar to state HANs.
- Analysis of state vital records data
- Development of tribal community health profiles and reports

Emergency Preparedness Role:

The Navajo Epidemiology Center (NEC) is an important member of the Navajo Pandemic Influenza Core Team, which has developed the Navajo Pandemic Influenza Plan and the recently adopted Navajo H1N1 Preparedness & Response Plan. In addition, NEC staff participates in annual influenza mass vaccination activities and provides public health and epidemiologic advice during vaccination exercises, tabletop exercises and public health emergencies. Navajo Division of Health (NDOH) programs are also heavily involved in building preparedness capacity across Navajo Nation. The NEC and other NDOH programs also participate in a number of local, regional and national meetings and conferences that focus on preparedness. The CSTE fellow would be welcome to participate in Navajo planning meetings, exercises and activities as well as other related meetings.

Assignment Location:	Window Rock, AZ
Primary Mentor:	Deborah Klaus, PhD, MS Director/Sr. Epidemiologist Navajo Epidemiology Center
Secondary Mentor:	Dornell Pete, MPH Epidemiologist

Navajo Epidemiology Center