

Infectious Disease

The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS), located in central New Jersey, provides public health services to over eight million New Jersey residents.

The fellow will work with the NJDHSS Communicable Disease Service (CDS), which is comprised of four area-specific programs (Infectious and Zoonotic Diseases, Sexually-Transmitted Diseases, Tuberculosis, and Vaccine-Preventable Diseases). CDS provides guidance to local health departments and health care facilities statewide regarding routine investigations of reportable communicable diseases and outbreaks as well as public health emergencies, including emerging infections and events related to bioterrorism. CDS has approximately 100 staff members who represent a range of expertise, including physicians, veterinarians, nurses, epidemiologists, and health educators, who are available to the fellow for consultation and/or collaboration.

The fellow's anticipated day-to-day activities would include work on long-term analytic projects and acute outbreak investigations. Other routine activities would include:

- Phone duty once a week (CDS epidemiologists rotate daily to answer phone inquiries from public health and health care partners regarding reportable communicable disease issues);
- Participation in weekly and ad hoc meetings with CDS epidemiologists regarding current investigations/outbreaks;
- Participation in monthly meetings with regional (i.e., based at local health departments) epidemiologists regarding current investigations/outbreaks and lectures on topics in public health;
- Participation in the monthly Epidemiology Seminar Series which feature presentations from epidemiologists throughout NJDHSS and include topics on infectious diseases, occupational health, environmental health, and health statistics.

Potential projects might include:

- Analyzing foodborne disease data;
- Analyzing rabies data;
- Conducting a West Nile virus seroprevalence study among mosquito researchers;
- Evaluating the impact of select infection control measures on reducing hospital-onset MRSA infections;
- Assess the validity of using aggregate cumulative antibiogram data from hospitals to estimate the statewide prevalence of select antimicrobial-resistant bacteria;

- Developing a plan to measure the impact of required influenza vaccination for daycare attendees.

The fellow will have numerous opportunities to lead and/or participate in outbreak investigations; the CDS receives over 100 reports of communicable disease outbreaks of various etiologies involving a wide range of settings each year.

In addition, the fellow will have numerous opportunities to work on interdisciplinary teams. Depending on the project/investigation, CDS works closely with other areas in NJDHSS, including the Consumer and Environmental Health Service, the Occupational Health Service, the Division of Health Emergency Preparedness and Response, the Public Health and Environmental Laboratories, and the Division of Health Care Quality and Oversight. The fellow will also have opportunities to collaborate with the NJDHSS Center for Health Statistics, which oversees areas including the state's Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, Healthy NJ 2010, and vital statistics analyses.

Program or surveillance system evaluation component:

The fellow may choose to analyze an existing CDS surveillance system—e.g., tuberculosis, influenza-like illness, pertussis.

Role of fellow in State Emergency Preparedness Plan:

In the event of a public health emergency, the fellow would be part of the CDS response team (which includes sub-teams in the areas of business continuity, Emergency Call Center, communications, epidemiology/surveillance, and data management). The fellow would serve in either the epidemiologic/surveillance or data management sub-teams.

Assignment Location: Trenton, NJ

Primary Mentor: Christina Tan, MD

State Epidemiologist

New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services

Advanced Degrees: MPH, Johns Hopkins (expected May 2009)

MD, Mt. Sinai School of Medicine, NY (1996)

Secondary Mentor: Corey Robertson, MD, MPH

Medical Director, Emerging Infectious Diseases

New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services

Advanced Degrees: MPH, University of South Carolina (2001)

MD, Brown University (1995)