

The Communicable Disease Epidemiology Section (CDES) conducts surveillance for notifiable communicable diseases (other than HIV/AIDS, TB, STDs) in Washington State. CDES coordinates multi-jurisdictional investigations and provides support for regional/local case or outbreak investigations. CDES also provides current communicable disease control information for local health departments including infectious disease, vector-borne and zoonotic disease consultation, recommendations for case and contact investigation, post-exposure prophylaxis, infection control, diagnostic laboratory testing and referrals for reference laboratory testing at the Washington State Department of Health Public Health Laboratories (PHL) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). CDES facilitates communications on disease control issues with local, state and federal public health agencies including military facilities and American Indian tribes in Washington, adjacent states, provinces and CDC. CDES also works to improve surveillance methods and epidemiologic response to public health emergencies, including acts of bioterrorism.

The Fellow would participate in daily CDES team meetings to report on and discuss current investigations and issues. They will work with local health departments, state, regional and local communicable disease epidemiologists, public health nurses, environmental health specialists, and the PHL on communicable disease investigations. They will assist in surveillance activities, data collection and analysis; planning and response to emerging issues such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and West Nile virus.

Recent collaborative data analysis projects include: evaluation of trends in *Chlamydia* infections from the HHS Region X Infertility Prevention Project; trends in community-acquired methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* infections from Group Health microbiology data. Recent communicable disease investigations conducted in conjunction with local public health agencies include a cluster of tick borne relapsing fever; two cases of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome; an outbreak of tuberculosis among the homeless; a multi-state outbreak of salmonellosis associated with alfalfa sprouts; and a cluster of cases of heroin-associated wound botulism. Currently CDES is coordinating a CDC Epi-Aid investigating a zoonotic disease outbreak in an animal research facility. A collaborative program in zoonotic disease surveillance is also being initiated with support from Public Health Preparedness and Response funds – participants will include wildlife rehabilitators, fish and wildlife biologists, veterinarians, Washington State University veterinary diagnostic laboratory, zoos and others. Other opportunities include enhancing international cross-border collaboration with British Columbia in communicable disease surveillance and investigation.

The recent implementation of an electronic notifiable conditions and laboratory reporting systems will provide ample opportunities for the fellow to evaluate surveillance, as will the recent implementation of surveillance for SARS, unexplained critical illness and death, and infections caused by antibiotic resistant organisms.

Surveillance and Epidemiologic Response to Bioterrorism is located within the CDES, providing many opportunities to be involved in public health emergency preparedness and response. Activities may include assisting with development of procedures and checklists for the Department of Health Communicable Disease Emergency Response Plan and participation in tabletop exercises and drills.

Assignment Location: Shoreline, WA

Primary Mentor: Mira Leslie, DVM, MPH
State Public Health Veterinarian (2002-present)

Advanced Degrees: DVM, Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine
(1994)
MPH, The University of Arizona (2000)

Secondary Mentor: Jo Hofmann, MD
State Epidemiologist for Communicable Disease (2001-present)

Advanced Degree: MD, University of Pennsylvania (1988)