

Infectious Disease

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) Communicable Disease Epidemiology Section (CDES) is located at the Washington State Public Health Laboratories (PHL) complex in Shoreline, WA approximately 12 miles north of downtown Seattle. Our section oversees surveillance for and investigation of notifiable communicable diseases in Washington (not including TB, STDs, HIV, and chronic viral hepatitis which are overseen by other sections within DOH), working in collaboration with 35 local health jurisdictions in the state. Surveillance and Epidemiologic Response to Bioterrorism is located within CDES, providing many opportunities for involvement in public health emergency preparedness and response. The section has a staff of 16 health professionals, including four doctoral level epidemiologists, eight masters level epidemiologists, a health education specialist, and support staff. The section office is adjacent to the PHL which provide reference laboratory services for the State, including testing for select agents and rapid diagnostic testing for some vaccine preventable diseases such as measles.

The Fellow participates in daily CDES team meetings and bi-monthly multi-jurisdictional communicable disease meetings to present and discuss current investigations and disease control issues. She/he works with other DOH programs (such as Food Safety, Immunization Program and Child Profile, Infectious Disease and Reproductive Health), and with local, state, and regional communicable disease epidemiologists, public health nurses, environmental health specialists, and PHL microbiologists on communicable disease investigations. The fellow assists in surveillance activities, data collection and analysis, planning and response to emerging issues such as SARS, West Nile virus, and avian influenza. Additional day-to-day activities will depend on the applicant's areas of interest and experience, but could include assisting with response to outbreaks of foodborne, vectorborne, zoonotic, or vaccine-preventable diseases; molecular epidemiology; development and presentation of epidemiologic training materials for local public health; participating in cross-border and emergency preparedness planning and training, including planning for pandemic influenza. The Fellow meets regularly with his/her mentors for feedback and also meets with other epidemiologists with whom they collaborate on projects. In addition to travel to the CSTE annual meeting, our Fellow attends the very popular West Coast Epi annual meeting held in CA, WA, or OR, and the annual Western Regional EIS meeting. Previous Fellows have published articles in the MMWR and traveled to state, national, and international meetings to present the results of their work in the section.

Opportunities for participation in multistate outbreak investigations of enteric and other communicable diseases are plentiful. Recent data analysis projects and communicable disease investigations conducted in conjunction with local public health agencies include Japanese encephalitis in a traveler; scombroid intoxication from escolar; assessment of increased rates of tularemia by region; evaluations of antibiotic resistance and rabies post exposure prophylaxis surveillance systems; analysis of ten years of pertussis

data comparing the utility of two databases; varicella surveillance system design, and design and implementation of a surveillance system for human transmissible spongiform encephalopathies.

Emergency response activities may include assisting with development of procedures and checklists for the Department of Health Communicable Disease Emergency Response Plan, pandemic influenza planning, and development and participation in tabletop exercises and drills. A recent project was an evaluation of the 24/7 response capacity of 35 local health jurisdictions. Because of our location, there is opportunity for involvement in the annual regional Cross-border Conference on emergency response and planning for security during the 2010 Olympics. There is also potential for collaborative projects with the Public Health Laboratories, the Immunization Program, and other Department of Health programs.

The recent implementation of a new electronic notifiable conditions database and electronic laboratory reporting system will provide ample opportunities for the fellow to evaluate surveillance systems.

Assignment Location:	Shoreline, Washington
Primary Mentor:	Kathryn MacDonald, PhD Foodborne and Enteric Disease Epidemiologist
Advanced Degrees:	PhD, University of Washington (1992) MS, University of Colorado Medical Center (1971)
Secondary Mentor:	Charla A (Chas) DeBolt, RN, MPH Vaccine Preventable Diseases Epidemiologist
Advanced Degrees:	MPH, Epidemiology, University of Washington (1998)