

Chronic Disease

The Washington State Department of Health proposes mentoring a Fellow through a collaboration of the Non-Infectious Conditions Epidemiology (NICE) unit and the Office of Community Wellness and Prevention (CWP). NICE resides in the Department's central epidemiology office and has a broad scope of work including chronic disease, injury, and the non-infectious aspects of maternal and child and environmental health. NICE provides epidemiologic services to programs in state and local health, external health-related organizations, and the public. NICE also has responsibility for chronic disease cluster investigations. CWP contains the Cancer Prevention and Control unit that houses the Comprehensive Cancer Control Partnership, the Washington State Cancer Registry, and the Washington Breast and Cervical Health Program; the Chronic Disease Prevention unit that includes programs for diabetes control, heart health, asthma, nutrition, and physical activity; the Tobacco Prevention and Control Program; the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC); and Steps to a Healthier Washington (Steps) which broadly addresses chronic disease prevention. The collaboration offers an opportunity for the Fellow to become immersed in chronic disease epidemiology on a day-to-day basis while developing a broader applied public health perspective through the connection with CWP programs.

The two most common daily activities are meetings and computer work. Meetings are generally with supervisors, coworkers, or external partners to plan projects, develop collaborative work, and review analytic findings and reports. Computer work includes activities such as analyzing data, writing reports, preparing oral presentations, and developing study protocols and related written material. On a weekly basis, the Fellow would have opportunities for field work related to study implementation, responding to public concerns regarding clusters of chronic disease, or presenting study findings to professional and lay audiences. NICE can support travel for regional and national conferences and training opportunities.

Potential projects offering opportunities for data analysis, field investigations and participation on a variety of interdisciplinary teams include:

- Assessing the impacts of programs to increase physical activity and healthy eating habits. This might include developing a survey of local policies that affect physical activity, nutrition and tobacco use. This could serve the Steps program's need to evaluate the impact of their local interventions against the background of statewide activities being implemented by the Physical Activity and Nutrition Unit and the Tobacco Prevention Program. It could also include assessing the impact of school policies on students' physical activity and food choices.
- Evaluating the impacts of programs for improving healthcare quality and reducing costs through adoption of best practices for screening for and management of chronic disease. This might include a focus on the Diabetes Collaborative, the broader Chronic Care Collaborative that includes diabetes, heart disease and cancer, or the Steps program that includes asthma, diabetes, tobacco and obesity.
- Using Healthy Youth and School Health Profile surveys to update the state fact worksheets and assess the relationship between school policies and students' nutritional practices and physical activity behaviors.
- Exploring associations between implementation of tobacco prevention activities in local communities and trends in tobacco use and health outcomes using data from the Behavioral

Risk Factor Surveillance System, the Healthy Youth Survey, and community scores for program implementation.

- Assisting with questionnaire development for the 2008 Healthy Youth Survey.
- Analyzing data collected as part of the Washington Adult Health Survey, a statewide field study focusing on undiagnosed hypertension, high blood cholesterol and diabetes. Data include biological samples, anthropometric measures and questionnaires.
- Analyzing data from the Healthy Worksite Survey designed to evaluate health policy improvement at worksites across Washington. Results will provide information for use in planning statewide initiatives to support worksite wellness policies and programs.
- Updating the protocol for responding to clusters of chronic disease by evaluating and incorporating new statistical approaches.

The Fellow will have the opportunity to evaluate one of several established surveillance systems, including the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey or the Healthy Youth Survey. Less well-established systems and systems that are currently used primarily as administrative databases, such as those used to monitor asthma, diabetes, heart health or the Washington Breast and Cervical Health Program, may also be appropriate for evaluation. These systems offer opportunities for in-depth understanding of how data are collected and managed, as well as opportunities for data analysis for developing recommendations for system-related data interpretation or policy. Opportunities for program evaluation are described under "potential projects" above.

NICE supports Communicable Disease Epidemiology and Environmental Health Programs in the event of a natural disaster, pandemic, or terrorist event. NICE personnel also have emergency response roles related to Washington's nuclear power facility and a chemical weapons depot located in Oregon just south of Washington. The Fellow will have the opportunity to participate in emergency preparedness activities, attending trainings and tabletop exercises as appropriate and available.

Primary Mentor: Juliet Van Eenwyk, Ph D, MS
State Epidemiologist for Non-Infectious Conditions; Section Director, Non-Infectious Conditions Epidemiology

Advanced Degrees: PhD, University of Illinois at Chicago (1990)
MS, Roosevelt University (1975)

Secondary Supervisor: Amira El Bastawissi, MBCHB, PhD
Senior Epidemiologist with the Office of Epidemiology

Advanced Degrees: PhD, The University of Texas (1993)
MS, Ohio State University (1984)