



The Postdoctoral Program at the Center for Gerontology and Healthcare Research

Founded by Dr. Sidney Katz in 1986 and directed by Dr. Vincent Mor since 1989, the postdoctoral program at Brown's Center for Gerontology and Healthcare Research trains clinicians and non-clinicians in health services research with an emphasis on geriatrics, gerontology, and chronic disease management.



BROWN
Alpert Medical School



About the Program

For nearly three decades the Center's postdoctoral program has benefited from and built upon a solid base of thematically consistent externally funded research. It has successfully recruited, trained, and launched the careers of numerous health services researchers who are leaders in the field.

The program is rooted in the premise that a biopsychosocial model is the most appropriate one to adopt in the study of chronic disease and geriatrics, and that such a model is best implemented in an interdisciplinary training program. In this program MDs and PhDs not only work together on funded projects, they also teach each other about the clinical aspects of the population and the research methods necessary to study it systematically. Further, special care is taken to ensure a good fit between the needs of each trainee and the interests, available resources, and capabilities of his or her faculty mentor.

In recent years the program has increased its emphasis on long-term care, pharmaco-epidemiology, and chronic disease management and has sharpened its methodological focus. Ties established with the departments of Economics, Sociology, and Medicine have been highly productive and feature prominently. There are numerous opportunities for ongoing collaboration with investigators at the newly established Veteran's Administration Health Service Research Program. The program also now covers geriatric pharmaco-epidemiology and organizational factors influencing the delivery of healthcare. Furthermore, collaboration with research centers focusing on behavioral medicine and social epidemiology offer additional opportunities for postdoctoral fellows in this program.

The program provides postdoctoral fellows with an exciting opportunity to participate in groundbreaking, interdisciplinary research in such areas as health promotion and prevention, long-term care, community-based systems of care, Healthcare organizations, and methodological approaches to health services research.

The goals of the program are threefold:

- to teach health services research methods as well as content material relevant to gerontology, long-term care, and chronic disease management;
- to train both physician and non-physician researchers;
- to give trainees didactic as well as "hands-on" supervised experience in health services research.

The program has openings for four postdoctoral fellows. Applicants must hold an MD or a PhD in sociology, epidemiology, economics, health service research or other related field.

Application review begins upon receipt and continues until the positions are filled. Read on for a description of the program and an application form.

Program Structure

Generally speaking, this is a two-year program. Since postdoctoral fellows arrive with different backgrounds and career goals, there is both a general curriculum, which all trainees must follow, and a trainee-specific curriculum. The general curriculum includes weekly, informal meetings with the program director, bi-weekly seminars in epidemiological or health services research methods, and monthly seminars on clinical or health policy issues in geriatrics delivered by leaders in the field. The trainee-specific curriculum consists of participation in a “major” and a “minor” research project as well as coursework in either the graduate program in epidemiology, biostatistics, and health services research or in the various summer institute programs in research methods.

Two tracks exist to accommodate differences in background:

- For the physician who comes without prior research training, enrollment in the Master of Public Health is desirable (see bms.brown.edu/pubhealth/mph). Over the two years of the fellowship, the physician fellow completes the MPH degree in concert with the other fellowship activities. He or she also continues seeing patients one half-day each week. Clinical activities are developed in conjunction with faculty in the affiliated hospital.
- For the non-physician, formal coursework is usually limited to specialty methods courses that provide methodological expertise.

At the beginning of each quarter throughout the fellowship, each fellow meets with his or her mentor and the program director. Goals for the coming three months are set and at each subsequent quarterly review, these are reviewed to determine whether they have been met and strategies for overcoming any barriers to achieving goals are implemented.



Fast Facts on Research at the Center

- 15 principle investigators
- 35+ current active projects
- Approximately \$20,516,421 in funding over the past three years
- Funding is split between federal agencies and non-federal agencies

During the second year, major project activities continue, but fellows spend much of their time preparing manuscripts for publication and presentations for national meetings, working on grant proposals, and securing a research and/or academic position. Before the end of the second year, fellows present their research at both a departmental seminar and a fellows' seminar.

“The postdoctoral program has provided me with a skill set and knowledge base that will enable me to build a research career bringing together the science of social work and public health. Working collaboratively with well-established health services researchers who support and nurture this type of integrative work has given me a clear direction for my future work connecting individual health with public health.”

Kelly A. Aschbrenner, Fellow 2007–2009

Clinical Exposure

Fellows have the opportunity to do clinical work in a number of specialized settings related to the interface of psychiatry and general Healthcare, including:

- an extensive behavioral medicine program comprising active research programs in obesity treatment and smoking cessation
- a memory disorder clinic
- a geriatric assessment rotation at a local hospital and an adjacent nursing home

Resources

Exposure to the various technical aspects of database management systems, whether for primary data collection or for use on existing data sets, is a critical aspect of the program. Fellows have access to a state-of-the-art research environment, complete with equipment, software, programming environments, systems programming, and data processing maintained by the Center’s technical staff. The Center houses an archive of computerized data sets, including studies that its faculty and associates have conducted, as well as publicly available data sets with a focus on long-term care and aging and preventive health practices, generally from national studies commissioned by governmental agencies. Center faculty and staff have years of experience working with administrative data sets such as Medicare and Medicaid claims, as well as with specialized clinical data from all US nursing homes. These are available to fellows working on the relevant projects.

Evaluation

Evaluation of fellows is largely outcome-oriented. Given the close association with faculty, the work of all fellows is frequently reviewed and critiqued, from the specification of research questions to the writing of a manuscript. More proximate opportunities for observing fellows’ performance include presentations at research seminars and national meetings and in their competition for research positions following completion of the program. Acceptance of articles for publication is another indicator of success. The ultimate measure of success is whether fellows become independently funded researchers; to date, more than 60 percent of all fellows who have completed the program have attained that goal. For physicians, an additional outcome measure is completion of the MPH degree.

About the Center

One of nine top-flight research centers that comprise Brown's Program in Public Health, the Center for Gerontology and Healthcare Research is nationally renowned for health services research focusing on chronic illness and long-term care.

The Center's primary mission is to advance the fields of gerontology and health services research through methodological and substantive research, informed by basic theories of aging, human development and the illness experience. The goal of these efforts is to enhance the quality of life of persons with chronic illness, especially older adults. The research focus, both basic and applied, draws upon the social sciences as well as the clinical disciplines.

The Center's faculty members hold primary appointments in the departments of Community Health, Economics, Family Medicine, Medicine, Surgery, Sociology, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, and Psychiatry and Human Behavior. Collaborative research relationships between hospital-based clinicians, particularly those located at the affiliated Veterans Administration hospital, and campus-based researchers provide the basis for numerous interdisciplinary health services research projects focusing on the Healthcare of older persons.

Brown University and the Warren Alpert Medical School are located in Providence, New England's second-largest city, with a population of approximately 160,000. As the state capital, it is the hub of Rhode Island's business, governmental and cultural activities. The Healthcare and biotech industries, fueled by the \$130 million in annual external research funding attracted by Brown and its affiliated hospitals, have transformed the landscape of the city. Former manufacturing facilities have provided prime space



for state-of-the-art research laboratories, and the Healthcare industry is the number-one employer in the state, with 52,000 Rhode Islanders holding jobs in that sector.

For more information on the Center and the program, please visit www.chcr.brown.edu/. For more information on Providence and Rhode Island, go to providenceri.com and www.visitrhodeisland.com/.

“I came into the program with a lot of research interests. My mentors helped me narrow down my focus into a doable goal, one which I have had multiple research opportunities in. This program is the perfect fit for me and I am hopeful that when it is complete, I can more easily reach my career goals.”

Samantha Sterns, Fellow 2008–2010

Application Process

Interested physicians who have completed some clinical training (preferably a residency and clinical fellowship, if appropriate) and non-physicians who have completed a PhD are invited to apply. Once applications have been reviewed by the faculty, a select group of candidates is invited for an interview. An invitation is based on a candidate's demonstrated academic ability, depth of commitment to health services research, and compatibility of research interests with ongoing projects at the Center.

Invited candidates spend an entire day at the Center, give a research presentation, interview with the faculty who comprise the Evaluation and Review Committee, and meet the current postdoctoral fellows. The program director and the faculty review written evaluations by faculty and fellows, as well as information provided through informal discussions.

Application

Applicants must be U.S. Citizens or permanent residents.

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

Social Security Number _____-_____-_____

Please enclose the following with your application:

- an essay (500 to 1,000 words) describing your career plans in the area of health services research. Include any particular research interests and experience.
- a curriculum vitae
- three current letters of reference, at least one of these from a faculty member in your doctoral program
- a copy of your best written work.

Send to:

**Audrey Kydd, Assistant Director of Administration
Center for Gerontology and Healthcare Research
Alpert Medical School of Brown University
121 S. Main, Box G-S121-6
Providence, Rhode Island 02912**

Tel. (401) 863-3211

Fax (401) 863-3489

Audrey_Kydd@Brown.edu

Women, minorities, and members of protected groups are encouraged to apply. Term of appointment is for one year, renewable contingent upon funding. Brown University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.

Where are they now?

Joan Teno, Fellow 1988-90

Professor at Brown University

Gary Belkin, Fellow 1989-1991

Associate Professor at New York University

Nick Castle, Fellow 1995-1997

Associate Professor at University of Pittsburgh

Michael Gerrardo, Fellow 2005-07

Assistant Professor at Ohio University



BROWN
Alpert Medical School

Center for Gerontology and Healthcare Research

Alpert Medical School of Brown University

121 South Main Street, Box G-S121-6

Providence, Rhode Island 02912

Tel. (401) 863-3211

Fax (401) 863-3489