

VA Quality Scholars Psychology Advanced Fellowship

The San Francisco VA Medical Center offers a postdoctoral psychology advanced fellowship position in the VA Quality Scholars Program with an emphasis on Interprofessional Primary Care.

The Quality Scholars (VAQS) Fellowship Program is a two-year postdoctoral psychology fellowship that emphasizes the development of specific skills and competencies in conducting research on interprofessional healthcare education and health services in integrated care/primary care settings. The development of research skills and competencies focuses on three general areas of research: (1) interprofessional healthcare education in primary/integrated care settings, (2) quality improvement, and (3) health services investigations. Interprofessional healthcare education research includes investigations of the impact of innovative approaches to interprofessional training on the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behavior of clinical healthcare trainees as well as on systems factors associated with team-based care, and patient outcomes. Quality improvement research involves the investigation of systems-based theories and strategies designed to improve quality of care. Health services research focuses on the role of psychology in the team-based PACT model of primary care, telehealth advances, patient satisfaction with educational and psychological services, and adaptations of evidence-based psychological treatments in integrated care/primary care settings. The Psychology VAQS fellow works closely with other fellows and mentors from nursing, medicine, and geriatrics backgrounds.

Additional areas of research in this fellowship include psychosocial aspects of chronic illness, assessment of common and unique mental health issues found in integrated care medical settings, psychological interventions for common and unique mental health and substance abuse issues, consultation and outreach in medical practice, and health promotion and disease prevention interventions. The fellowship includes opportunities to participate in curriculum development and implementation in the areas of patient-centered communication, motivational interviewing, shared decision-making, and team development. The clinical settings for this research fellowship include the Medical Practice Clinics, Medical Practice ? Mental Health Integrated Clinic (MP-MHIC), Pain Clinic, Health Promotion Disease Prevention Program (HPDP), and PACT Intensive Management (PIM).

Many of the research projects involve collaboration with faculty and trainees in the interprofessional Center of Excellence for Education in Patient-aligned Care Teams (CoE EdPACT) at the San Francisco VA Medical Center. The VA has restructured primary care into Patient Aligned Care Teams (PACTs), often called ?patient-centered medical homes? outside of VA, based on principles and evidence-based practices relevant for improving care for veterans. The overall mission of the CoE EdPACT is to develop and implement a model of patient-centered, interprofessional education that advances primary care within and beyond the VA. The EdPACT training model brings together teams of health care providers and staff, including internal medicine (IM) residents, adult nurse practitioner (NP) students, and associated health trainees to build core knowledge and skills that they apply to their own

individual patient panel, a shared team panel of patients, and to the larger clinical systems in which they work. This educational model incorporates design principles for optimal workplace learning, using experiences from clinical practice as the primary curricular material, establishing a culture and supportive working relationships that reinforce patient-centered approaches to care, and activating providers/staff/trainees to take responsibility for improving patient care. Communication, teamwork, and continuous performance improvement are primary foci of interprofessional skill-building.

The VAQS psychology fellow trains in the clinic(s) or programs associated with this research fellowship and receives supervision from the psychologists, medical educators, and other clinical investigators leading those research studies and clinics. The fellow is primarily involved in research activities (75% time) and can allot up to 25 percent of their time to educational, clinical, and administrative activities. As fellows move from Year 1 to Year 2, they progress from a project designed by their mentor to a more independently conceived project, which they lead. There are additional opportunities for training in clinical supervision, leadership, and program development. The fellow also participates in didactic training designed to facilitate research design and implementation skills, including qualitative analysis, assessment methodologies, survey development, recruitment strategies in clinical settings, human protection guidelines and ethical issues in human research, manuscript preparation, and grant proposal writing. This didactic training includes healthcare education development seminars, journal clubs, and workshops in the Office of Medical Education at UCSF.

VAQS Psychology Research Fellowship Program structure

The psychology research fellows train in the clinic(s) or programs associated with their research fellowships. They receive supervision from the psychologists, medical educators, and other clinical investigators leading those research studies and clinics. The research fellows are primarily involved in research activities (~75% time) and can allot up to 25 percent of their time to educational, clinical, and administrative activities. As fellows move from Year 1 to Year 2, they progress from projects designed by their mentor to a more independently conceived project, which they lead. There are additional opportunities for training in clinical supervision, leadership, and program development. The fellows also participate in didactic training designed to facilitate research design and implementation skills, including seminars, grand rounds, and journal clubs.

VAQS Psychology Research Fellowship goals

At the end of VAQS Psychology Research Fellowship, we expect fellows to have acquired the following competencies and completed the following tasks:

- gained knowledge of their designated content area of scientific inquiry
- advanced their knowledge of statistical and methodological techniques needed for research in their area of interest
- understand empirical research projects in their area of interest
- conducted at least two research projects: One designed by their preceptor; and one of their own design, for which they have primary responsibility
- made multiple internal presentations
- made at least two presentations of their work at national meetings
- published one to three journal articles
- submitted a small grant application to local funding sources
- published additional publications from the work completed as a scholar during the two

years following enrollment in our program

In keeping with our philosophy that postdoctoral fellows are considered "junior colleagues," fellows are invited to attend the Psychology Faculty Meeting chaired by Dr. Russell Lemle, Chief Psychologist, which meets 2-3 times per month. The agenda for this meeting focuses on issues current psychologists on staff are facing. Fellows have ample opportunities to participate in program development and take active leadership roles. All fellows have the opportunity to conduct an administrative project during the year. Examples of such are Externship Coordinator, Quality Improvement Projects, organizing training seminars, etc.

Supervision and state licensure

Fellows receive supervision from supervisors/mentors in their area of interest. Some research fellowships may wish to pursue state licensure. Requirements for state licensure differ from state to state. Ways of achieving eligibility for licensure for fellows wishing to pursue this option are planned and arranged with the primary supervisor/mentor for those fellowships. Licensure in the state of California requires at least four hours of regularly scheduled supervision per week with a minimum of two supervisors, at least two of which are individual supervision. Supervision and evaluation methods include self-report of clinical work, supervision sessions, live observation of client and/or staff interactions; review and co-signature of all written material such as progress notes or other additions to the computerized patient record system; observation of case formulation and case presentation in staff meetings, treatment planning conferences, and other multidisciplinary settings; review of process notes, audiotape recording and/or videotape recording of psychotherapy and assessment sessions; and the review of psychological testing protocols and reports. Fellows should expect to be assigned readings and literature reviews as part of their supervision.

Evaluations

Fellows are formally evaluated at least twice a year to guide and determine progress in achieving fellowship goals and competencies. Evaluations are discussed with fellows and may be modified by mutual agreement before being placed in the training files. Fellows also are asked to evaluate their supervisors at each evaluation period, and an exit interview is completed at the end of fellowship to solicit feedback and suggestions for the program going forward.

Selection process

Completed applications are reviewed by the supervisors of each research fellowship. Application ratings are based on the applicant's interest, experience and quality of previous clinical training in the area of emphasis, academic work and accomplishments, letters of recommendation, personal qualities of the applicant (maturity, ethics, responsibility, insight, etc.) and written material. Ultimately, our selection criteria are based on a "goodness-of-fit" and we look for fellows whose experience and career goals match the training that we offer.

Training term

The research fellowships are full-time, two-year, 52 week commitments (2080 hours per year). Research fellows are entitled to 10 federal holidays and earn sick leave and vacation (annual leave) days at a rate of 4 hours of each per two-week pay period (a total of 13 days of each).

San Francisco VA also offers generous professional leave for conferences and other approved educational activities. Some fellowships can extend to a third year.

Stipend and Benefits

The current stipend is \$50,006 for the first year. State and federal income tax and FICA are withheld from Fellows' checks. Fellows are not covered by Civil Service retirement or leave and are not eligible for federal life insurance benefits. The United States Government covers fellows for malpractice under the Federal Tort Claims Act. VA offers individual and family health insurance plans for fellows on a matching basis, (i.e., fellows pay half of the premium and the VA pays the other half.) On June 26, 2013, the Supreme Court ruled that Section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) is unconstitutional. As a result of this decision, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has now extended benefits to employees and annuitants who have legally married a spouse of the same sex. Dental and vision insurance are also available. San Francisco VA Medical Center also offers a public transportation reimbursement program. Fellows are entitled to 10 federal holidays and earn sick leave and vacation (annual leave) days at a rate of 4 hours of each per two-week pay period (a total of 13 days of each). San Francisco VA also offers professional leave for conferences and other approved educational activities.

Application & Selection Procedures

Eligibility

Candidates **MUST** be graduates of APA-accredited doctoral programs in clinical or counseling psychology and **MUST** have completed an APA-accredited internship. All requirements for the doctoral degree must be completed prior to the start of the fellowship year. Persons with a Ph.D. in another area of psychology who meet the APA criteria for respecialization training in Clinical or Counseling Psychology are also eligible. The VA requires that applicants are US Citizens, men have registered for selective service, and all have had varicella infection (?chicken pox?) or vaccination for such prior to the start of the fellowship.

Specific details related to eligibility:

1. U.S. citizenship. VA is unable to consider applications from anyone who is not currently a U.S. citizen. Verification of citizenship is required following selection. All interns and fellows must complete a Certification of Citizenship in the United States prior to beginning VA training.
2. Fellows are subject to fingerprinting and background checks. Match result and selection decisions are contingent on passing these screens.
3. VA conducts drug screening exams on randomly selected personnel as well as new employees. Interns and Fellows are not required to be tested prior to beginning work, but once on staff they are subject to random selection for testing as are other employees.
4. Have received a Doctorate from an APA-accredited graduate program in Clinical or Counseling Psychology. Persons with a doctorate in another area of psychology who meet the APA criteria for respecialization training in Clinical or Counseling Psychology are also eligible.
5. Have completed an internship program accredited by the APA Commission on Accreditation or have completed a VA- sponsored internship.

Application procedure

Applications for the VAQS postdoctoral psychology research fellowship include:

1. Letter of interest
2. Current Curriculum Vitae
3. Three letters of Recommendation
4. A letter of support from your Dissertation chairperson describing your dissertation status and timeline if you have not completed your graduate degree. Dissertations must be complete before the postdoctoral fellowship begins. Please note we will be monitoring dissertation progress and status on a routine basis. All requirements for the doctoral degree must be completed prior to the start of the fellowship year.
5. A letter of support from your current Internship Training Director indicating that you are in good standing to successfully complete your predoctoral internship, including the expected completion date. If internship already completed, you can mail a copy of your predoctoral internship certificate.

Contact information

Specific questions may be directed to Dr. Timothy Carmody (Timothy.Carmody@va.gov ^[1]) or via 415-221-4810 x6344.

Other information

The San Francisco VAQS Psychology Research Fellowship is affiliated with the University of California, San Francisco. In accord with the Federal Drug-Free Workplace Program, fellows may be subject to urine testing for illicit drug use. Other branches of the federal government (Office of Personnel Management) may conduct routine background checks at their discretion.

The San Francisco VAMC is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer. All qualified applicants are encouraged to apply, including minorities and women. VA seeks candidates whose experience, teaching, research, or community service has prepared them to contribute to our commitment to diversity and excellence.

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Links

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