

Infectious Diseases-HAI

Allegheny County Health Department, Bureau of Assessment, Statistics, and Epidemiology

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Assignment Description

The Fellow will be assigned to the Bureau of Assessment, Statistics, and Epidemiology and will work as part of the epidemiology team. The Fellow will act as a liaison to healthcare facilities in the county, focusing on investigation and control of healthcare acquired infections. The Fellow's main projects will involve development of an antibiotic stewardship promotion project, implementation of CRE surveillance, and an evaluation of the invasive MRSA surveillance system. The Fellow will be involved in investigations of disease outbreaks as they arise. The Department will provide all necessary resources and supervision, access to data, introductions to community partners, and opportunities for professional development.

Day-to-Day Activities

The Fellow's day-to-day activities may vary depending on the need for disease report follow-up, outbreak investigations, and training/workshop events. The Fellow will have regular communication with health care facilities, discussions with colleagues at the health department, and collaboration with other county and state agencies. Outbreaks may be reported at any time. Preparedness for emerging diseases and other health hazards may also require the Fellow's attention.

Potential Projects

Surveillance Implementation of CRE surveillance Activity

CSTE has designated carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae (CRE) as a nationally notifiable disease. The Fellow will oversee implementation of CRE reporting in Allegheny County. This will involve education of healthcare facilities and laboratories, promotion of infection control measures, and coordination with the state health department on information system issues.

Surveillance Invasive MRSA reporting evaluation Evaluation

Invasive MRSA is reportable in Allegheny County but not in other areas of Pennsylvania and therefore not included in the state's electronic disease reporting system (PA-NEDSS). Providers submit electronic reports via a separate electronic system. The completeness of reporting is unknown. Hospital discharge data indicate that twice as many persons are hospitalized with MRSA bacteremia than are reported through the invasive MRSA surveillance system. The Fellow will evaluate the completeness, timeliness, and usefulness of the invasive MRSA reporting system.

Major Project Promotion of Antibiotic Stewardship

ACHD has begun to promote antibiotic stewardship by hosting workshops for hospitals, long term care facilities, and outpatient facilities, but much more work is needed. The Fellow will plan additional workshops for health care facilities, develop a mentorship program for hospitals and their associated skilled nursing facilities, and work on a regional antibiogram.

Additional Healthcare-associated outbreak investigations Project

The Fellow will assist with the investigations of healthcare-associated outbreaks, including clusters of Legionella, invasive Group A Strep, Clostridium difficile, norovirus, and influenza. Investigations will involve confirming the diagnosis, collecting information on cases, and providing infection control recommendations to healthcare facilities.

Preparedness Role

The Fellow will participate in monthly conference calls with state health department preparedness staff and attend occasional meetings of the Region 13 Health and Medical Committee. The Fellow will participate in training sessions and response exercises centered on emerging infections, such as novel influenza strains, bioterrorism agents, and other newly identified agents.

Additional Activities

- 1) The Fellow will be able to participate in all major outbreak investigations by conducting interviews, entering and analyzing data, and presenting results.
- 2) The Fellow can participate in activities related to our Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan.
- 3) If funding is available, the Fellow will be able to study for and register for the certification in infection prevention and control (CIC®) examination.

Mentors

Primary	Kristen Mertz MD, MPH Medical Epidemiologist
Secondary	LuAnn Brink PhD, MPH Chief of Epidemiology