

## **Position Description**

### **APTR Fellowship – MPH level Arthritis Program Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

The Division of Adult and Community Health (DACH) provides leadership and coordinates requests for research, consultation, training, collaboration and technical assistance or information on managed care, health promotion, behavioral surveys, aging, quality-of-life, epilepsy and arthritis. Within DACH there exist several branches, including the Arthritis, Epilepsy and Quality of Life Branch (AEQoL), which provides leadership and support on issues related to health-related quality of life, and preventing and reducing the impact of selected chronic conditions. AEQoL concentrates its efforts on epidemiological studies and effective health promotion and chronic disease prevention activities among adults. Staff provide leadership and technical assistance within areas of aging, quality of life, epilepsy, and arthritis.

The Arthritis Program, located in AEQoL, was created in 1999 to help implement the aims of the 1999 *National Arthritis Action Plan - A Public Health Strategy* (NAAP). The NAAP, created by the Arthritis Foundation, the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, CDC and 90 other organizations (copies available at 770-488-5464 or [www.cdc.gov/arthritis](http://www.cdc.gov/arthritis)), lays out a broad strategic vision for addressing arthritis as a public health problem. The NAAP helped to attract first-ever funding for arthritis at CDC, allowing activities to expand from a part-time epidemiologist in 1998 to a staff of 14, a budget of over \$13 million in FY2008, intra- and extramural research activities, and arthritis programs in 21 state health departments.

#### **Fellowship Assignment Description:**

The Fellow will conduct scientific studies in support of the new and growing area of arthritis public health. These studies include improved surveillance of arthritis in general and specific types of arthritis and other rheumatic conditions at both the national and state levels, additional descriptive and analytic epidemiological analyses to identify high risk groups and factors associated with the occurrence and progression of specific types, and cost-effectiveness research of available and newly developed public health interventions.

The Fellow, in collaboration with the mentor, other expert staff within the Arthritis Program and Branch, and within the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, will undertake some of these studies. The Fellowship is flexible, in that specific projects can be fit to the Fellow's interests and epidemiological, economic, and evaluative skills. Such studies could include: 1) descriptive and analytic analyses of national and state data (e.g., the National Health Interview Survey, the state-based Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, etc.), 2) analytic

studies of data previously unexplored by the CDC Arthritis Program (e.g., Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey, other Medicare data, the Medical Expenditure Panel Surveys, etc.) as well as other surveys of the National Center for Health Statistics, 3) analytic studies of the CDC-funded Johnston County Osteoarthritis Project (a population-based, longitudinal study of hip and knee osteoarthritis started in 1990 and now entering its second follow-up phase), and 3) evaluation, from a public health perspective, of currently used arthritis interventions in the form of systematic reviews/meta-analyses. Some areas of analytic interest to the Arthritis Program, and likely topics for the Fellow, include but are not limited to: 1) combining several years of survey data to develop better prevalence estimates for less common or joint specific rheumatic conditions (e.g., various types of inflammatory arthritis, osteoarthritis of the knee), 2) building on existing analyses that relate arthritis impact to that of other common chronic conditions (e.g., cardiovascular disease, diabetes), and 3) analyzing arthritis impact from different perspectives (e.g., individual, health care system, employer).

There is considerable Program expertise available and very strong support for the fellow in programming, epidemiology, statistics, and arthritis. Within the Arthritis Program there are 5 epidemiologists, 1 senior behavioral scientist, 2 health promotion specialists, 1 full time programmer and 1 half-time statistician available for support of Fellowship activities. Additional support within the Division and Center includes experts in aging, quality-of-life, physical activity, survey methods, epidemiology and statistical methods. Close working relationships with experts in survey design, conduct, and analysis currently exist. Current relationships also exist with external experts in clinical rheumatology, pediatric rheumatology, epidemiology and public health, and physical activity.

**Required and/or Desired Skills and Knowledge:**

The Fellow should have a masters level degree in public health, epidemiology or statistics/biostatistics. . The Fellow should have strong, data analysis experience with statistical software packages (SAS, SUDAAN, etc.), preferably experience with complex survey datasets. In addition, the Fellow should have the ability to work relatively independently and have good verbal, written, and organizational skills. The Fellow should be able to work with various individuals and organizations that are addressing the impact of arthritis and its numerous risk factors, such as the Arthritis Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. Current knowledge of arthritis and other rheumatic conditions is not required and can be obtained easily in this position.

**Expected Benefits:**

Our previous Fellows (5) and Summer Interns (6) have produced over 35 scientific presentations and peer-reviewed publications. The Fellow will gain experience in the design, analysis, presentation and publication of descriptive and analytic studies of arthritis epidemiology. The Fellow will have an opportunity to increase knowledge of the most common cause of disability in the United States

while gaining hands-on data analysis and public health experience. The Fellow will engage in applied public health activities at local, state and national levels, learn how research relates to program and policy and will gain exposure to multi-disciplinary professionals in the area. The Fellow will be a key person in implementing a national strategy directed at a large and growing public health problem. With this experience, the Fellow will develop skills in both public health and arthritis that will be sought after as this currently small field continues its rapid growth.

CDC will gain by having a professional who can focus exclusively on arthritis and provide greater links to the field of public health, and by helping increase the critical mass of public health expertise in this field.

**Period of Assignment:** One year starting in September 2009.

**Salary and Benefits:**

\$ 43,500 - Fellowship Stipend  
\$ 4,000 - Fellowship Allowance (Health insurance and training expenses)  
\$ 4,000 - Project-Related Travel

**Supervising Mentors:**

Jennifer Hootman PhD, ATC, FACSM, FNATA, Epidemiologist  
Charles Helmick MD, Medical Epidemiologist