

## Psychiatric Research/Neurosciences Advanced Fellowship

### 1. FELLOWSHIP PURPOSE

The Psychiatric Research/Neurosciences Advanced Fellowship is intended to facilitate research relevant to the health care of veterans, to develop physician potential for healthcare leadership positions, and to contribute to VA and the nation's health work force needs.

This two-year fellowship offers post-residency research, educational, and clinical training to eligible physician candidates. These include outstanding physicians who have completed their Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) or American Osteopathic Association (AOA) Executive Committee of the Council on Post-doctoral Training (ECCOPT) specialty and subspecialty residency training in adult psychiatry, neurology, physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R), or other specialties related to the neurosciences. Because this is a program of the Office of Academic Affiliations, all participants shall be appointed as trainees.

### Program Announcement

This program announcement gives directions to physician applicants and their sponsoring VA facilities about applying for a VA Special Fellowship in Psychiatric Research/Neurosciences (including Traumatic Brain Injuries and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder).

Applications shall be judged on three principal factors: 1) the proposed site's capabilities to provide the specified training, 2) the proposed course of study and, 3) the participant's qualifications. Although any VA facility is eligible to apply, the application must demonstrate the institution's capability of providing the proposed course of study.

Applicants shall be eligible to participate in this program provided that they have completed all requirements needed to be a fully credentialed independent practitioner (or equivalent) in their field at a VA facility and meet other requirements specified below. Physicians must be either certified in a VA-recognized medical specialty or eligible and actively pursuing such certification.

### 2. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Research, education, and clinical fellowship training experiences may focus on such areas as psychiatric disorders, neurologic disorders including disorders of the brain, traumatic injuries of the head or spine, or related debilitating diseases. Examples include but are not limited to traumatic injury of the central or peripheral nervous system, epilepsy, malignancy, myelitis, strokes, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and dementia.

The fellowship places particular emphasis on excellent mentoring. Outstanding VA psychiatrists, neurologists, physiatrists, neuroscientists, or other physicians and scientists in relevant specialties serve as preceptors. The Fellowship Program Director, preceptors, and applicants work together to design a program of rich research, education, and clinical training experiences. The Fellowship Program Director serves as the primary mentor and, along with other preceptors, guides fellowship participants throughout the two-year program.

Approximately 75 percent of the fellowship time is to be devoted to biomedical or clinical research including didactic education related to research. Approximately 25 percent of the fellowship time is allocated to VA clinical activities at the local VA facility. Fellows must conduct the majority of their responsibilities at a VA facility. Should a program wish to have fellows conduct clinical activities at non-VA sites, prior written approval from Office of Academic Affiliations must be obtained. Across the entire special fellowship experience, fellows are expected to carry out a major portion of their research and educational activities at a VA facility.

### 3. **POLICIES**

#### a. **Governance**

- (1) The Office of Academic Affiliations maintains overall responsibility for the administration of the Advanced Fellowship in Psychiatric Research/Neurosciences.
- (2) The fellowship program for post-residency physicians is governed by M-8, Part II, Chapter 4, "Fellowship Programs for Physicians and Dentists" or subsequent handbooks that may supersede that section.
- (3) The fellowship program for associated health disciplines is governed VHA Manual M-8, Part II, Chapter 4 or subsequent handbooks that may supersede that section

#### b. **Appointment and Compensation**

##### (1) **Physician Fellows**

Appointments will be made under the authority of 38 U.S.C 7406 for two years. The PAID code will be provided in the memoranda notifying facilities of their selection as a training site.

The stipend rate will be based on years of previously completed ACGME accredited residency training and equivalent experiences as determined by OAA, index rates approved at the affiliated university and the respective VA facility. OAA reserves the right to use a different mechanism to determine fellow pay. Fellows shall be paid directly by the VA facility unless OAA provides written approval for another payment mechanism.

Stipend Supplementation- Fellows shall not receive additional revenue from any other source in compensation for their duties in this program.

Citizenship. U.S. citizens shall be given priority in selection. Non-U.S. citizen appointments are under the authority of Title 38 U.S.C 7407.

**c. VACO Support**

(1) OAA will provide funds to VA facilities for fellows' stipends and fringe benefits.

(2) VA Office of Research and Development will provide up to \$3,000/year per fellow to be used for research expenses or conference registration fees (these funds cannot be used for computing equipment or travel expenses).

**d. Educational Details to Non-VA Sites**

Fellows may be detailed to other educational institutions without loss of pay, but under no circumstances may the total time spent in non-VA institutions exceed one-sixth of the total hours a fellow is in a pay and training status with VA. Should a program wish to have fellows conduct clinical activities at non-VA sites, prior written approval from the Office of Academic Affiliations must be obtained.

**e. Liability Protection**

Fellows will be protected from personal liability while providing professional services as a trainee at a VA facility under the Federal Employees Liability Reform and Tort Compensation Act, 28 U.S.C. 2679(b)-(d). Should a program wish to have fellows conduct clinical activities at non-VA sites, an appropriate affiliation agreement must be completed and prior written approval from Office of Academic Affiliations must be obtained.

**f. Expenses**

Except as specified above, expenses connected to the fellows' recruitment, educational activities, or research are not funded under this program. Transportation to the VA facility and housing arrangements are the sole responsibility of the fellow.

**g. Service Obligation**

There is no service obligation after completion of the fellowship program. However, fellows are encouraged to seek VA employment. Program faculty mentorship is expected to include career counseling, including assistance in obtaining VA employment.

**h. Identification of Fellowship Status**

(1) Fellows shall notify VA locally and nationally as required prior to any publication or presentation.

(2) Fellows shall also identify their VA support in all reports and presentations during the fellowship program and after the fellowship program if the report or presentation is related to activities conducted during the fellowship program. Failure to do so while in the fellowship program may result in termination of the fellowship.

**i. Clinical Privileges/ Scope of Practice**

**(1) Physicians**

Physician Advanced Fellows must have completed their primary specialty training in order to qualify for initial board certification. Subject to the policies and procedures of the appointing institution's medical staff bylaws, Advanced Fellows are to be privileged as licensed independent practitioners (LIPs) in the primary medical specialty in which they completed approved training. Exceptions to this requirement for LIP privileging are rare, and require written OAA approval. The assigned privileges as an independent practitioner shall be within the scope of practice for which the Advanced Fellow has been previously trained. A physician Advanced Fellow participating in courses of study that provide clinical training pertinent to the Advanced Fellowship shall be considered a dependent practitioner, subject to appropriate graduated supervision for such clinical care.

**4. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

**a. Facility Eligibility Criteria**

(1) Every sponsoring VA facility must be affiliated with a medical school having an ACGME or AOA accredited residency program, irrespective of the profession of the proposed participant. In addition, the sponsoring VA facility is encouraged to have affiliations with appropriate school's programs for associated health disciplines recruited as fellows. If new affiliations are made to develop this relationship, a formal affiliation agreement must be executed. (Contact the Office of Academic Affiliations (14) for assistance). Affiliate- and VA-sponsored training programs must be accredited by the nationally recognized accrediting body for the profession.

(2) The Chief of Staff, Associate Chief of Staff for Research, and Designated Education Officer (e.g. the Associate Chief of Staff for Education) must support the application and endorse the potential contribution of the proposed project to the development of the applicant's academic or clinical career.

(3) The sponsoring VA facility must designate a well-qualified Fellowship Program Director as the primary mentor to guide the fellow's training.

(4) The sponsoring VA facility must have a process to assure that documents required for the appointment of Advanced Fellows have been verified and are in order.

(5) If the sponsoring VA facility is approved as a site for relevant site-based VA Advanced Fellowships (e.g. Advanced SCI, MIRECC, etc), applications should be pursued through

those programs rather than through this program if appropriate for the proposed fellow's preparation and interests.

**b. Fellow Eligibility Criteria**

Prior to beginning the fellowship, a physician fellow must meet all of the following:

- (a) Have completed a residency program accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) or the Bureau of Professional Education (BPE) of the American Osteopathic Association.
- (b) Not be enrolled simultaneously in any accredited physician residency or fellowship program.
- (c) Have an active, unrestricted license to practice in the U.S. The license does not have to be from the state in which the program is located.
- (d) Be ABMS or AOA ECCOPT board certified or eligible, with demonstration of active pursuit of board certification.
- (e) Be appropriately credentialed and privileged for clinical practice at the local VA facility.
- (f) Be a U.S. citizen or possess a current visa suitable for participation in this paid educational activity. U.S. citizens shall be given priority in selection.
- (g) If a graduate of a foreign medical school, must have evidence of Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) certification that is stamped "valid indefinitely."
- (h) Demonstrate interest in pursuing a VA career with Psychiatry Research/Neuroscience as a significant focus.
- (i) Applicants must be willing to accept a full-time, temporary VA position upon entering this training program. Applicants who are VA staff physicians must sign a statement confirming their voluntary acceptance of a change in appointment and reduced pay for the duration of the training.
- (j) Appointments will be made under 38 USC 7406 for two years, except if extended per approval by OAA.
- (k) PAID Codes. Use Pay Plan L; type of appointment code 6; pay basis 1; grade 00; step N; remark code 99; occupational series 0602-64.

## 5. SELECTION CRITERIA

### a. The Facility

(1) A facility must provide evidence of committed leadership, time, personnel, and equipment to support a culture of excellence in patient care related to the proposed course of study. The facility must demonstrate the following:

(a) Expertise in the clinical area specific to the applicant's proposed clinical expertise. Identification of expertise may be demonstrated through other VA recognition, such as designation as a Clinical Center of Excellence.

(b) Adequate educational program to support the fellow's proposed activities. This must include experienced mentorship and supervision appropriate to the participant's professional field. The sponsoring VA facility must designate a well-qualified Fellowship Program Director as the primary mentor to guide the fellow's training.

(c) Evidence of a strong partnership between the VA facility and its academic affiliate(s).

(d) Strong interprofessional leadership by team members involved in relevant clinical care at the site.

(e) Commitment to develop individualized learning programs for trainees.

(f) VISN and facility commitment to build and sustain an outstanding learning environment.

(g) Commitment to a process of disseminating educational material and promoting Psychiatric Research/Neuroscience beyond the training site.

(h) Evidence of sound evaluation strategies for programmatic and individual evaluation.

(2) Because this Advanced Fellowship is not a site-based program with recurring positions, approval of a particular application does not guarantee that future applications from the same facility shall be approved solely because of historic participation.

### b. Program Director

(1) The Program Director serves as the primary mentor for the fellows and coordinates all aspects of the fellow's program. The Fellowship Program Director must be active in a field relevant to the proposed area of inquiry (such as psychiatry, neurology, PM&R, or the neurosciences, e.g., biochemistry [neurotransmitters], endocrinology, immunology, infectious diseases, virology, or other relevant basic sciences and disciplines).

(2) The Program Director must have a proven track record of basic science or clinical research with relevant publications, awards, current research projects, and current funding sources.

(3) The Program Director must demonstrate experience as a successful mentor and have the local administrative resources in place to assure appropriate fellowship support.

**c. Fellowship Plan**

(1) Each application shall describe a proposed course of study. Appropriate topics include psychiatric disorders, neurologic disorders including disorders of the brain, traumatic injuries of the head or spine, or related debilitating diseases or other areas for which such a relationship is articulated in the application.

(2) The proposed course of study shall specify VA or other location(s) where the proposed activities shall take place and the care setting (e.g. inpatient, outpatient, home-based care, electronically mediated coordinated care, etc.). An expected outcome of the course of study shall be stated, with a description of the expected future practice that the participant might be expected to accomplish upon completion of the proposed course of study.

**6. APPLICATION APPROVAL CRITERIA**

Applications shall be judged on:

- a. Proposed research topic relevance to the broad topic of psychiatry research/neuroscience.
- b. Participant's demonstration of adequate preparation to participate in the proposed program (the proposed course of study must logically relate to the candidate's prior preparation).
- c. Institutional demonstration of expertise in the proposed area.
- d. Institutional demonstration of ability to provide outstanding educational environment for the proposed course of study.
- e. Program Director's demonstration of ability to supervise the proposed program.
- f. Suitable evaluation strategy.
- g. The value of the proposed area of inquiry to veterans and to VA.
- h. The likelihood of being able to achieve the stated fellowship goals.
- i. Sufficiency of support from applying facility.
- j. Extent of other Advanced Fellowship Support received by the applying facility.

k. OAA's ability to provide requisite funding.

## 7. SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

### a. Due Date

Applications for participation for each Academic Year are accepted after October 1st. Applications intended to begin on July 1st must be received by close of business **May 28th**. **See Attachment A for application instructions.**

### b. Application Transmittal

Please see OAA website for instructions on how to submit:  
[http://vawww.va.gov/oaafellowships/nomination\\_and\\_information.asp](http://vawww.va.gov/oaafellowships/nomination_and_information.asp)

## 8. OAA CONTACT PERSONS

For information or questions related to this fellowship program, please contact Ms. Deborah Ludke by email at [deborah.ludke@va.gov](mailto:deborah.ludke@va.gov) or by phone at (562) 826-5942 or Dr. Stuart Gilman at [stuart.gilman@va.gov](mailto:stuart.gilman@va.gov) or by phone at (562) 826-5323.

## ATTACHMENT A APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

### 1. DUE DATE

Applications for each academic year are accepted on an ongoing basis. For applicants intending to begin July 1<sup>st</sup>, applications must be received in OAA no later than May 31<sup>st</sup>.

### 2. APPLICATION PACKET

The application packet should be no longer than 20 pages total and must contain the following:

**a. Transmittal letter** from the VA facility Director endorsing the applicant. The letter must also contain the name, title, routing symbol, phone number, e-mail address, and fax number of the Fellowship Program Director.

#### **b. Information from Applicant**

- (1) Curriculum vitae that summarizes prior education, clinical training, clinical experiences and other relevant employment, board and licensure status, relevant publications, and any other information relevant to participation in this program (Limit 3 pages).
- (2) Application for Residents, VA Form 10-2850b. The form is available on VA's web site in the Publications area (<http://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/vha-10-2850b-fill.pdf>).
- (3) Career plan outlining how the proposed training relates to career aspirations (Limit 2 pages).

#### **c. Information from Program Director**

- (1) Statement accepting the role of primary mentor for the fellow's development and research, educational, and clinical progress.
- (2) Commitment to work with the fellow and VA facility to develop an individualized educational plan and specific VA and VISN orientation for the fellow.
- (3) Commitment to provide individual and programmatic evaluation.
- (4) Brief curriculum vitae (Biosketch is acceptable) providing adequate information to demonstrate program director's qualifications in research and education. An example of the VA Biosketch may be found by clicking on the following link:  
[http://vaww.research.va.gov/funding/docs/SF424R-R\\_biosketchsample.doc](http://vaww.research.va.gov/funding/docs/SF424R-R_biosketchsample.doc)

- (5) Outline of mentoring experience.
- (6) Description of administrative infrastructure resources to provide fellowship support.
- (7) Description of the educational environment, including relationship of trainee to other investigators and clinicians in fields related to the applicant's proposed area of research.

Description of site characteristics: Document the site criteria including:

- (a) Expertise in the clinical area specific to the applicant's proposed clinical expertise. Identification of expertise may be demonstrated through other VA recognition, such as Clinical Center of Excellence.
  - (b) Adequate educational program to support the fellow's proposed activities. This must include experienced mentorship and supervision appropriate to the participant's professional field. The sponsoring VA facility must designate a well-qualified Fellowship Program Director as the primary mentor to guide the fellow's training.
  - (c) Evidence of a strong partnership between the VA facility and its academic affiliate(s).
  - (e) Commitment to develop individualized learning programs with trainees.
  - (f) If the sponsoring VA facility is approved as a site for other relevant VA Advanced Fellowships, applications should be pursued through those programs rather than through this program.
  - (g) VISN and facility commitment to build and sustain an outstanding learning environment.
  - (h) Commitment to a process of disseminating educational material and promoting P/TBI beyond the training site.
  - (i) Evidence of sound evaluation strategies for programmatic and individual evaluation.
- (9) Other relevant resources available to the fellow including laboratory and animal facilities, VA and other databases, computer support, statistical support, office space, and telephones.
- (10) Credential Verification Documents
- (a) Fellows Credentials Verification Letter (FCVL) (Attachment A).
  - (b) Fellows Credentials Verification Checklist (Attachment B).

**d. Information jointly from Applicant and Program Director – Proposed Fellowship Plan**

Proposed Fellowship Plan – a concise outline of the proposed plan for the program (it is expected that this plan will be more fully developed should the application be approved). Please address issues including:

- (1) Classroom - Outline the specific plan for didactic education related to the fellowship program to foster the fellow's skill development. (for example, where will they learn, what will they learn, and how will they learn?)
- (2) Clinical – Outline the specific plan for clinical education related to the fellowship program to foster the fellow's skill development (for example: where will they learn, what will they learn, and how will they learn?)
- (3) Research - Briefly describe the proposed research activity. Address the significance of the research area, and the relevance of the project to VA's mission. Include hypotheses, description of the research methods likely to be used, and anticipated data to be collected. Although the proposal should be developed in close collaboration with the preceptor, the applicant should develop the proposal. Emphasize the potential value of the proposed areas of inquiry to veteran's health issues.
- (4) Evaluation - Describe evaluation methods and milestones that will be used to determine the fellow's progress.