

VA Quality Scholars Fellowship Program for Psychologists at the Minneapolis VA Health Care System



- **Psychologists who have a desire to learn how to do, lead, and study health care improvement may be interested in the VA Quality Scholars Fellowship Program (VAQS).** The VAQS Fellowship is a two-year postdoctoral interprofessional fellowship that emphasizes the development of specific skills and competencies in designing and leading interdisciplinary research on quality improvement within a healthcare setting. Quality improvement research can focus on inpatient or outpatient topics, either within or outside of mental health care. For more information on the VAQS program <https://www.vaqs.org>
- **Although VAQS psychology fellows are required to complete research projects in the area of quality improvement, they may also dedicate time to additional research topics with any of the Minneapolis VHCS's large team of psychology clinician investigators.** Additional research topics include the study of PTSD, schizophrenia, bipolar disorders, other affective disorders, TBI, personality assessment using self-report, psychophysiology, and functional scanning methodologies. Fellows also have the option of collaborating with investigators from the Minneapolis VAHCS's Center of Innovation in health service research and development, the Center for Care Delivery and Outcomes Research.
- The VAQS psychology fellows receive training in the clinic(s) or programs associated with this research fellowship and are supervised by the psychologists, medical educators, and other clinical investigators leading those research studies and clinics. The fellow is primarily involved in research activities (minimum 75% time between quality improvement and other research projects) 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 mentors to more independently conceived projects, 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 leadership, 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 improvement and leadership curriculum coordinated by Houston VA, interprofessional healthcare education development seminars, journal clubs, and workshops through the University of Minnesota.

Setting

The Minneapolis Veterans Affairs Health Care System (MVAHCS) is an affiliated teaching facility located in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. As a "flagship" medical center within the VA Health Care system, the Minneapolis VAHCS provides a full range of patient care services with state-of-the-art technology, as well as education and research.

Training Term

24 Months

Stipend and Fringe Benefits

State and federal income tax and FICA are withheld from Fellows' checks. 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.) Dental and vision insurance are also available. Travel to an annual summer institute is provided, and additional travel for national presentations can be available. We also offer professional leave for conferences and other approved educational activities.

Research opportunities

Research opportunities in the VAQS Fellowship are highly flexible. One component will involve the development of research skills and competencies focused on quality improvement and health services Investigations (25% time). However, additional research opportunities (50 – 75% time) can vary widely with the interests of the fellow and can include work with any of our mental health or health services investigators. Sample topics include the study of PTSD, schizophrenia, bipolar disorders, other affective disorders, TBI, personality assessment using self-report, psychophysiology, mHealth approaches, and functional scanning methodologies. The Psychology VAQS fellow works closely with other fellows and mentors from nursing and

medicine backgrounds.

Training Faculty

To learn more about research mentorship:

- Navigate to the **Research** page of our Clinical Psychology Postdoc Program
- The Center for Care Delivery and Outcomes Research
<https://www.ccdor.research.va.gov/>

Clinical Training Opportunities

Although the VAQS fellowship program is not part of our APA Accredited APPIC Member Clinical Psychology, Clinical Neuropsychology and Rehabilitation Psychology training programs, some of the **Clinical Training Experiences** in those program may be available to VAQS fellows.

How to Apply

Email applications directly to Michele Spont, PhD, the VAQS Fellowship Senior Psychology Faculty. Dr. Spont can be contact by email with any questions about the program.

- Email: michele.spoont@va.gov

