

**SAN FRANCISCO VETERANS AFFAIRS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
POSTDOCTORAL ADVANCED FELLOWSHIP
SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS TREATMENT RESEARCH**



The San Francisco VA Medical Center offers a two-year Post-Doctoral VA Advanced Fellowship in Mental Illness Research and Treatment (MIRT) with a focus on substance use disorder (SUD) treatment research. This fellowship program is associated with the Sierra Pacific MIRECC (VISN 21), affiliated with the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), and funded by the Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA), Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

We are recruiting for one position for the upcoming training cycle.

Psychologists and physicians (psychiatrist or other board-certified/board eligible physician) are eligible. The primary goal of the MIRT program is to train psychologists, other allied health professionals, and MDs to become leading clinical researchers in high priority mental health areas of focus. Over the course of the two-year program, fellows are trained in academic and health systems research, advanced clinical care service delivery, and program administration in an interdisciplinary setting. The fellowship combines individual mentored research and clinical training with state-of-the-art educational experiences, including didactics on career development (e.g., grant and manuscript preparation, the role of mentorship), recent advances in conducting clinical research in mental health (from genetics to designing the best interventions), and state-of-the-art methodological approaches to mental health research and practice.

Fellows devote 75% of their time to patient-oriented research and education activities and 25% to direct patient clinical care. In collaboration with their mentors, fellows will develop and implement a research project, publish and present findings, participate in grant writing, and utilize the latest technology for educational activities and clinical service delivery.

Our SUD faculty have extensive and varied research interests including:

- Development, evaluation (randomized clinical trials), and implementation of neuroscience-informed interventions (e.g., cognitive bias modification, mindfulness based virtual reality, peripheral nerve stimulation) to enhance SUD treatment outcomes
- Analysis of motivational interviewing and other in-session processes
- Iterative development and evaluation of novel web- and smartphone-based mobile health interventions using human-centered design, mixed methods, and qualitative data coding and analytic techniques
- Multimodal neuroimaging (functional MRI, structural MRI, proton magnetic resonance spectroscopy, and diffusion tensor imaging) to investigate underlying neurobiological mechanisms of SUD recovery
- Validation of novel assessment tools (speech analyses to identify substance use and associated risks, virtual reality based cognitive assessment) and in-depth examination of their associations with treatment outcomes
- Quality improvement, implementation, and research projects to reduce drug related harms (e.g., naloxone, sterile syringes, fentanyl test strips, and other harm reduction supplies; distribution via harm reduction vending machines; syringe services programs; outreach services for veterans at-risk and experiencing homelessness)

SUD Treatment Research Core Faculty Mentors:

David Pennington, PhD (Fellowship Director)

Brian Borsari, PhD

Ellen Herbst, MD

Additional Co-Mentors:

Eric Alcid, MD, PhD

Steven Batki, MD

Tauheed Zaman, MD

Tessa Rife-Pennington, PharmD, BCGP

Affiliated Addiction Recovery Treatment Services Clinical PhD and MD Faculty:

Catherine Baxley, PhD

Christopher Galloway, PhD

John Straznickas, MD

Kellie Rollins, PsyD

Kristine Burkman, PhD

Mark Elliott, MD

Melissa London, PhD

Sam Wan, PhD

Stephen Leung, MD

Takeo Toyoshima, MD

Fellows will actively participate in ongoing research and grant submissions, pilot projects, and will have opportunities for first-author publications, presentation of findings at conferences using new and existing datasets, and to prepare and compete for independent research grants. Clinical training will focus on assessment and treatment of Veterans with substance use disorders at affiliated clinics at the SFVA.

One highly successful aspect of training has been the video conference seminar series. Twice a month, a leading expert in the field presents to fellows at all MIRECC sites through the video conferencing system. The didactics emphasize two main areas. One includes presentations on all aspects of career development from grant and manuscript preparation to the role of mentorship. The second emphasis is on the most recent advances in conducting specific components of clinical research in mental health, from genetics to designing the best interventions. There is also a strong emphasis on state-of-the-art methodological approaches to mental health research and practice. Seminar topics last year included VA career development, funding and resources, behavioral genetics, health informatics, and designing clinical trials of behavioral therapies. Ongoing multi-site workshops on manuscript and grant preparation are also provided to the fellows in addition

to ongoing weekly biostatistical consultation through the coordinating center. For more information about this fellowship program please contact Dr. David L. Pennington (david.pennington2@va.gov).

Research Medical Center Community

The San Francisco VA Medical Center, or “Fort Miley,” as it is known to San Franciscans, is a nationally known teaching hospital in one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world. Located on a hill seven miles from downtown San Francisco, the hospital overlooks the Pacific Ocean to the west and the Golden Gate Bridge to the north. The grounds cover approximately 30 acres and include 23 buildings. Each year San Francisco VA Medical Center provides Services to more than 400,000 veterans living in an eight-county area of Northern California. The Medical Center provides diagnostic and treatment services in a number of specialty areas including neurological diseases, cardiology, oncology, renal dialysis, and open-heart surgery in addition to mental health treatment.

The San Francisco VA Medical Center is affiliated with the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), one of the top ranked medical schools in the country, and we train 1500 of their students in 60 professional and allied health academic programs yearly. In addition to its broader commitment to the veteran population and education, SFVAMC has the largest funded research program in the Veterans Health Administration with more than \$87 million in annual research expenditures. Our Medical Center is the top-ranked VA Medical Center in terms of research grants. There are over 220 active research projects currently being conducted. Areas of particular interest are stress and health, PTSD, substance use disorders, neuroscience disease, aging, interprofessional training, oncology, hypertension, stroke, cardiovascular disease, Hepatitis C, health services research and advanced medical imaging.

SFVAMC also has the largest non-profit research foundation in VA, the Northern California Institute for Research and Education (NCIRE; also known as The Veterans Health Research Institute) which administers \$54 million dollars from which indirect costs serve to enhance the VA research enterprise. The Medical Center has four Medical Science Research Enhancement Award Programs (REAP) in neurology research, prostate cancer, bone research, and rehabilitation research and one HSR&D REAP in aging research. It is one of the few medical centers in the world equipped for studies using both whole-body magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and spectroscopy, and is the site of VA’s National Center for the Imaging of Neurological Diseases. (For a directory of SFVA researchers please see: <https://www.ncire.org/>).

The Medical Center is fully accredited by the Joint Commission for its general medical and surgical programs as well as its psychiatry and addictive disorder programs. It is approved by the American Medical Association for the training of medical students and residents in all the major specialties and subspecialties, the Council of Teaching Hospitals of the Association of American Medical Colleges, and the West Bay Hospital Conference.

General Breadth of Training

Education of current and future health care providers is one of the five missions of the San Francisco VA Medical Center. Over 650 fellows, residents, interns, and students from a wide array of disciplines train here yearly. Unit based in-services are offered regularly. Since the Mental Health Service is affiliated with the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, UCSF Medical School, our staff and trainees have access to their library, colloquia, and seminars including weekly Psychiatry Grand Rounds.

The national training mission of VA is broad and explicitly includes training of health care professionals for the nation, as well as for the VA system. We train fellows who go on to VA careers, and we train others who go on to work in research, academia, other medical centers, and the private sector. Many of our own postdoctoral fellows have recently gone on to obtain positions in VA careers, both here and at other facilities.

Advanced Research Fellowship Goals:

At the end of Advanced Research Fellowships, 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
- Completed multiple internal presentations
- Completed 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

Facility and Training Resources

Fellows will have their own workspace with lockable cabinets, drawers, their own computer and telephone line with private extension number. Fellows have access to program support, medical library at the VA as well as use of UCSF library and other resources. Clinical space is provided through a room check-out procedure if necessary. Each VA computer has access to the Internet and on-line literature search resources as well as word processing and the VA electronic medical record system (called CPRS). There is a broad range of psychological and neuropsychological tests available. Clerical support is available through each clinic as well as through Psychological Services. The SFVAMC Medical Library has over 350 current journal subscriptions, 43 of which are mental health related. Medline and Psych Info searches are provided through the library, as are numerous other resources. Fellows also have access to the medical library of UCSF, with its 2,600 current journals and Center for Knowledge Management services.

Fellows will also have access to UCSF resources for junior investigators, including grant writing and statistical workshops for junior researchers, and consultative resources on grant preparation through the UCSF Clinical and Translational Science Institute (CTSI, <https://ctsi.ucsf.edu/>).

Supervision and State Licensure

Fellows receive supervision from supervisors/mentors in their area of interest. Some research fellows 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; 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 regular intervals 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 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 research 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 professional leave for conferences and other approved educational activities. Some fellowships can extend to a third year. Requirements for state licensure as a professional psychologist can be met within some of our research fellowships.

Stipend and Benefits

The current 2023-2024 stipend is \$63,833 for first year Psychology fellows. The VA funds MD fellows' stipends in amounts based on previously completed ACGME accredited residency training, and 2024 PGY5 stipend is set at \$99,479. These stipends are established by OAA and are adjusted according to rates paid by comparable non-VA postdoctoral fellowship programs. 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

Psychology 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. MD applicants must have completed ACGME accredited residency training, be board eligible or board certified, and have an active, unrestricted U.S. license to practice. 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.

Additional 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. Selection decisions are contingent on passing these screens.
3. VA conducts drug screening exams on randomly selected personnel as well as new employees. 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.

Application Procedure

To apply for one of these postdoctoral research fellowships, please submit the below application materials. Applicants are to submit their materials by email to Dr. David Pennington via email:

david.pennington2@va.gov. The application deadline is **December 15, but applications submitted after that date may be considered until the position is filled.** Please do not mail any materials in hard copy form.

1. Letter of interest, including a summary of educational, research, and clinical experiences; your areas of clinical and research interest and its alignment with MIRT SUD treatment research, specific clinical and research goals for your fellowship, and a statement of your career goals.
2. Current Curriculum Vitae
3. Three signed letters of Recommendation
4. A work sample, such a published manuscript on which you are first author or other written product that highlights your work relevant to this trainingship
5. 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.
6. 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

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San Francisco Veterans Affairs Health Care System

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Other Information

The San Francisco VA's Psychology Research Fellowship Program is affiliated with the University of California, San Francisco.

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.