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## **CHAPTER 4. FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMS FOR PHYSICIANS AND DENTISTS**

### **4.01 PURPOSE**

The purpose of this chapter is to outline policies and procedures relating to the establishment and administration of special fellowship programs for physicians and dentists in VA facilities.

### **4.02 AUTHORITY**

The basic authority for the conduct of fellowship programs for physicians and dentists is contained in 38 U.S.C., chapter 73.

### **4.03 GOALS**

The goals of the fellowship programs are to provide specialized training and academic pursuit for physicians and dentists in areas of competence directed primarily to serve the special physician and dentist needs of VHS&RA and to develop role models for VA and national leadership in these specialized areas.

### **4.04 ESTABLISHMENT OF FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMS**

New VA-wide fellowship programs will be implemented only after approval by the CMD (Chief Medical Director). Responsibility for seeking approvals from the CMD for new systemwide programs resides solely with the Office of Academic Affairs (141). However, VA facilities may suggest new VA-wide fellowship programs. Such proposals are to be submitted to the ACMD for Academic Affairs (141) for evaluation.

### **4.05 SELECTION PROCEDURE**

The ACMD for Academic Affairs (141) will solicit applications for fellowship participation from VA facilities according to criteria that will be announced as programs are initiated or competitively reviewed. VA facilities will receive necessary instructions outlining the procedures to be followed in preparing an application either for program site designation or for individual postdoctoral program selection.

### **4.06 RECRUITMENT OF FELLOWS**

The recruitment and initial selection of Fellows at program sites is the responsibility of the Program Director in the VA facility conducting the program or research project. The recruitment process should be coordinated with the appropriate department(s) of the affiliated medical or dental school. In considering candidates, Program Directors will develop selection criteria which are uniformly applied to all candidates. Criteria for selection will be documented at the designated program site. VA facilities designated as program sites will be notified as to the number of fellowship positions allocated per program for each Academic Year.

### **4.07 NOMINATION PROCEDURE**

A letter of nomination for each Fellow selected, signed by the VA facility Director, will be sent to the ACMD for Academic Affairs (141). The text of the letter must include the type of fellowship program, the name of the proposed candidate, degree(s), specialty board certification status, licensure information, and proposed stipend level. Each



nomination letter must be accompanied by a completed VA Form 10-2850b, Dec. 1987, Residency Application and Appointment Information or the Robert Wood Johnson application for VA/RWJ Clinical Scholars. Upon completion of the selection process and within the ceilings set by the Office of Academic Affairs (141), the salary level for physicians will be determined by the local index rates for comparable fellowships, at the VA medical center and the affiliated university.

#### **4.08 APPROVAL PROCEDURE**

After reviewing each nomination submitted, the ACMD for Academic Affairs (141) will accept or reject each candidate and will notify the Program Director through the VA facility Director. Approval and subsequent appointment of VA-employed dentists as Fellows will be coordinated with the ACMD for Dentistry (16).

#### **4.09 APPOINTMENT PROCEDURE**

a. **Non-VA Employees.** Facility directors may nominate to the ACMD for Academic Affairs (141) post residency non-VA physicians and dentists, or residents under special circumstances, for temporary full-time appointment under authority of 38 U.S.C. 4114(b) in accordance with the provisions of VHS&RA Supplement MP-5, part II, chapter 2, and M-8, part II, chapter 4.

b. **VA On-Duty Employees.** Facility directors may nominate to the ACMD for Academic Affairs (141) VA staff physicians and dentists for appointment. Employees now serving on a probationary or permanent appointment under 38 U.S.C. 4104(1) must voluntarily request a change to temporary appointment under 38 U.S.C. 4114(a)(1)(A) to participate in the training.

c. **Fellowship Status.** All fellowship participants serve as trainees for the duration of the appointment period on a temporary full-time basis.

d. **Licensure Status.** Because of the advanced level of training, fellowship participants must have active, unrestricted licensure to practice medicine or dentistry, as appropriate.

e. **Required Documentation.** The Chief of Staff, or designee, is responsible for retention of the following documents on all fellows at the fellowship site.

(1) VA Form 10-2850b, Dec. 1987, Residency Application and Appointment Information. In the case of VA Fellows in the RWJ (Robert Wood Johnson) Clinical Scholars Program, a copy of the RWJ application must also be on file.

(2) Curriculum vitae of the candidate providing information not available from the VA application, such as undergraduate major, additional degrees, publications, honors, etc.

(3) Three letters recommending the candidate for the specific fellowship program under consideration.

f. **Additional Documentation.** Depending on the program and a candidate's background, additional documentation may be required. In all cases, the policies and documentation required by MP-5, part II, chapter 2 and its VHS&RA supplement, and M-8, part II, chapter 4 for appointment must be retained on file at the fellowship site

and be available for review by Office of Academic Affairs (141), or by site visitors, including SERP (Systematic External Review Program). Incomplete or inaccurate records may result in the termination of a specific fellowship appointment or of the site as a designated place for fellowship training.

g. **Length of Appointment.** All Fellows will be initially appointed as of July 1. All appointments to fellowship programs will be limited to the time specified for each program or research project. Annual proficiency ratings for fellows will be prepared in accordance with VHS&RA supplement MP-5, part II, chapter 6. In the event of resignations or other changes in status at any time during the training period, the ACMD for Academic Affairs (141) shall be notified immediately by telephone and in writing.

#### **4.10 FUNDING**

a. All fellows will be in ungraded positions with a full FTET but without special pay or bonus for the tenure of the appointments.

b. Each physician, dentist, or clinical scholar appointee will receive a per annum stipend related as closely as practicable to local affiliate fellowship stipend levels.

c. Stipend levels will be determined by the highest post graduate level attained through previous ACGME residency training plus experience in nationally recognized Fellowships sponsored by NIMH, NIA, or similar agencies.

d. Non-VA Employees. Deviations from stipends reflecting local conditions for comparable fellowships are permissible in cases of exceptional qualifications. Such qualifications might include achievement of tenured faculty appointment (Associate or Full Professor), principal investigator for nationally competitive research grants, and publications in recognized, peer-reviewed professional journals. Fellow stipends, however, will not under any circumstances exceed the Intermediate Grade, Step Ten.

e. VA On-Duty Employees. An on-duty employee whose rate of pay exceeds the local rate of pay when converted to a training status must request a voluntary reduction, as appropriate, for the purpose of becoming a trainee. On completion of training, the grade and current equivalent of the salary rate held by such employee prior to entering training may be restored by the approving authority on recommendation of the appropriate Professional Standards Board. At the same time, the rate may be further adjusted to include periodic step increases which otherwise would have been earned if the individual had not become a trainee. The individual is entitled to receive a two-step increase above that adjusted rate if also qualified for change to a higher grade. The effective date of each such action will be the first day of the first pay period following the completion of training.

f. Funds for stipend and fringe benefits will be forwarded to fellowship training sites by Academic Affairs (144).

g. Appointees approved by OAA (141) will advance by one stipend level for each year of the tenure of the appointment and are not eligible for promotions, special advancements, or periodic step increases.

h. Accepted candidates must be willing to travel to the training site entirely at their own expense. VA employees should be advised that they are not entitled to per diem



during this training period because this transfer is voluntary. VA Central Office will not pay travel and relocation costs, but these expenses may be paid by the training site facility, depending on the availability of funds.

i. The ACMD for Academic Affairs (144) will provide FTEE, stipends, and fringe benefits for physician and dentist fellows appointed to special fellowship programs directly to the training site.

j. Fellows will be eligible for such benefits as annual leave, sick leave, health insurance, life insurance, and retirement.

k. Accepted candidates will be identified for PAID System Reporting and cost accounting purposes by specific assignment codes (see apps.).

#### **4.11 EDUCATIONAL DETAIL**

All programs are to abide by VA policies related to Educational Detail ("1/6th Rule"). Any exceptions must be approved by the Office of Academic Affairs (141). It is the responsibility of the Chief of Staff to control non-VA training experiences. The time away from the VA is to be compiled and recorded by the aggregate parts of a day, week, or month that the Fellow is not physically present in the VA medical center (see also M-8, pt. II, par. 1.10).

#### **4.12 RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY**

a. Participants of special fellowship programs for physicians and dentists in Ambulatory Care, Geriatric Medicine, Geriatric Dentistry, Spinal Cord Injury, or Substance Abuse--and in the Clinical Scholars Program may compete for a third research-oriented year.

b. Fellows selected for a third year of support from the Office of Academic Affairs are expected to spend at least 75 percent of their time on research under the supervision of an established investigator at a VA medical center.

c. Candidates will be considered on the basis of academic and professional achievement as well as their potential for growth and leadership in an academic and/or governmental setting.

d. Applications must include the following documents:

(1) An outline of the research project; limit 3-5 pages, doublespaced, including references.

(2) A current curriculum vitae from the candidate listing articles, already published or accepted for publication in refereed journals, and VA or non-VA research grants.

(3) A current curriculum vitae from the candidate's mentor listing current VA or non-VA research grants and most pertinent recent publications. Also include the

names and current faculty positions of any past fellows under this mentor's immediate supervision; limit 3 pages.

e. Applications should be submitted (in 3 copies) to reach the Office of Academic Affairs (141), VA Central Office, 810 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20420, by December 15, for the next academic year. Applicants will be notified of decisions by the following January 15.

#### **4.13 MEDICAL TREATMENT OF NONVETERANS**

The Office of General Counsel has advised that VA Fellows can participate in training programs involving medical treatment of nonveterans, wherever located, providing VA Fellows adhere to the prohibition on assuming responsibility for the medical care of such patients as outlined in 38 U.S.C. 4108(a)(1). However, VA-paid time spent away from the VA medical center must be compensated for by use of a WOC exchange in a manner similar to that required in VA house staff programs. (See VHS&RA Supp., MP-5, pt. II, ch. 2 and 3.

#### **4.14 INSURANCE CONSIDERATIONS**

VA Fellows must be informed that they are covered by the protections of 38 U.S.C. 4116 while at their VA training site, but that this coverage is not transferable to non-VA facilities. Any non-VA facility hosting rotations will have to provide insurance coverage for the length of that rotation, or Fellows will have to purchase personal malpractice insurance.

#### **4.15 PIT (POSTGRADUATE AND INSERVICE TRAINING) FUNDS**

Centrally-directed PIT funds, if available, will be allocated to each Fellowship program. These funds are restricted to the exclusive use of Fellows for education and training purposes. Individual requests to utilize these funds will be processed through normal channels at the fellowship sites. The Program Director in the VA facility conducting the program will be responsible for administering and monitoring the utilization of PIT funds for the Fellows at the facility. Documentation and justification of PIT activities and expenditures should be contained in the progress reports submitted annually to the ACMD for Academic Affairs (141). Guidelines for the use of these funds are contained in M-8, part IV. When a Fellowship position is vacated, remaining funds earmarked for the position must be returned to Office of Academic Affairs (141) immediately.

#### **4.16 VA EMPLOYMENT FOLLOWING COMPLETION OF TRAINING**

Fellows are encouraged to seek regular full-time employment utilizing their education and training in the VA following completion of the fellowship. Personnel offices at the designated training sites can provide information concerning possible future VA employment opportunities and furnish assistance in securing VA employment.

#### **4.17 PROGRAM CONTINUATION AND RENEWAL**

a. **Progress Reports.** By October 1 each year, the Director of each fellowship program will submit a progress report for the previous academic year to the ACMD for Academic Affairs (141). The content should focus on applicant activity related to new fellows, productivity as well as strengths and weaknesses of current fellows, post-fellowship career choices of graduating fellows and changes in jobs and academic appointments of program alumni/ae. Other information should describe changes in resources, affiliate support, and utilization of CORE PIT (Postgraduate and Inservice Training) Funds. An ICP (Individual Curriculum Plan) for each Fellow is a required part of the annual report.

b. **Program Continuation.** If, as a result of Office of Academic Affairs (141) or other VA Central Office site visits and review of annual progress reports, it is

determined



that a fellowship program is not achieving the goals of the VA and of that program in an acceptable manner, it will be terminated. The Office of Academic Affairs (141) will then withdraw the resources for reallocation elsewhere. In considering the merit for continuing an existing program, at least four major areas will be reviewed:

(1) The ability to recruit and retain desirable candidates.

(2) The achievement record of both Fellows and program.

(3) The extent of support provided by the VA facility and by the affiliated medical and/or dental school.

(4) The overall quality of the program as compared to other VA fellowship programs of the same type.

c. **Competitive Renewal.** Each fellowship program will be required to reapply for renewal of its approved status as a fellowship site upon approaching the end of a 5-year or other length cycle of operation determined by the previous competitive review. Reapplications are likely to have to compete with other VA medical centers invited to apply.











## **VA FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMS**

### **1. PHYSICIAN FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM IN GERIATRICS**

a. Specialties. The recruitment specialties are family practice, internal medicine, neurology, psychiatry, and rehabilitation medicine.

b. Length of the Program - 2 or 3 years.

c. PAID Code. The PAID assignment code is 34.

### **2. DENTIST GERIATRIC FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM**

a. Specialties. The recruitment specialties are periodontics, prosthodontics, oral pathology, and dental public health or an equivalent post-graduate degree, and general practice residency graduates who have at least 2 years of clinical and/or academic experience beyond the dental degree. All VA dentists with 5 years of VA clinical experience are eligible to become Fellows.

b. Length of the Program - 2 or 3 years.

c. PAID Code. The PAID assignment code is 34.

### **3. SPINAL CORD INJURY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM**

a. Specialties. The recruitment specialties are anesthesiology, family practice, general surgery, internal medicine, neurology, neurosurgery, orthopedic surgery, physical medicine and rehabilitation, psychiatry, and urology.

b. Length of the Program - 1 to 3 years.

c. PAID Code. The PAID assignment code is 37.

### **4. SUBSTANCE ABUSE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM**

a. Specialties. The recruitment specialties are anesthesiology, family practice, internal medicine, neurology, psychiatry, and clinical pharmacology.

b. Length of the Program - 2 or 3 years.

c. PAID Code. The PAID assignment code is 17.

### **5. POST DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS FOR RESEARCH TRAINING IN PSYCHIATRY**

a. Specialties. The recruitment specialty is limited to psychiatry.

b. Length of Fellowships - 2 or 3 years.

c. PAID Code. The PAID assignment code is H1.

6. **POST DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS FOR SCHIZOPHRENIA RESEARCH**

a. Specialties. The recruitment specialty is limited to psychiatry.

b. Length of Fellowships - 2 or 3 years.

c. PAID Code. The PAID assignment code is H2.

**7. PHYSICIAN FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM IN AMBULATORY CARE**

a. Specialties. The recruitment specialties are family practice, internal medicine, all medical subspecialties, neurology, and psychiatry.

b. Length of Program - 2 or 3 years.

c. PAID Code. The PAID assignment code is H3.

**8. POST DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS IN CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY**

a. Specialties. The recruitment specialties are anesthesiology, family practice, internal medicine, all medical subspecialties, psychiatry, and surgery. Eligibility is limited to M.D. degree holders.

b. Length of Fellowships - 2 or 3 years.

c. PAID Code. The PAID assignment code is H4.











**VA FELLOWS IN THE RWJ (ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON)  
CLINICAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM**

1. **Specialties.** All medical specialties are eligible.
  
2. **Length of the Program** - 2 or 3 years.
  
3. **PAID Code.** The PAID assignment code is 35.
  
4. **VA Central Office Liaison.** The Office of Academic Affairs (141) will have a liaison representative to the Advisory Board of the RWJ Foundation for the Clinical Scholars Program.
  
5. **Local Supervision.** The COS (Chief of Staff) at designated sites will serve as the VA local liaison in collaboration with the RWJ Program Director in the affiliated university. The COS, or an individual designated by the COS, supervises the VA-RWJ Fellows and is responsible for monitoring the projects of VA-RWJ Fellows in collaboration with the program Director in the affiliated university. The COS may delegate the day-to-day supervision of the VA-RWJ Fellows to the Chief, HSR&D (Health Services Research and Development) (152), the ACOS/R&D (151), or the ACOS/E (141).
  
6. **Eligibility Criteria.** Candidates must meet the following criteria:
  - a. Commitment to a career consonant with the purpose of the Clinical Scholars Program.
  
  - b. Competence as clinicians in specific specialties.
  
  - c. Certification or eligibility for certification by an American Specialty Board.
  
7. **Application and Selection.** Application forms are available from the Chief of Staff at the designated VA training site, the program Director in the affiliated academic institution, or the RWJ Foundation, P.O. Box 2316, Princeton, NJ 08540. Completed applications for the following academic year should be submitted to the RWJ Foundation in Princeton, NJ, by April 1, 18 months before begin of the fellowship. Selection of VA-RWJ Fellows will be governed by the same competitive criteria applied to all RWJ candidates by the RWJ Foundation, the VA-RWJ training site, and the affiliated academic institution.
  
8. **Appointment Procedure.** Nominations of VA-RWJ Fellows will be made to the Office of Academic Affairs (141) by the VA facility Director for appointment under authority of 38 U.S.C. 4114(b).
  
9. **Pay Determination.** Physicians appointed as VA Fellows in the RWJ Clinical Scholars Program will receive a per annum stipend that is related as closely as practicable to the stipend level of Clinical Scholars enrolled in the RWJ program of the affiliated academic institution. Appointees will be in graded or ungraded

positions for the tenure of the appointment and are not eligible for promotion. For determination of stipend levels see paragraph 4.10.

10. **Educational Program.** The educational component of the VA-RWJ program will be comparable to the university-based RWJ Clinical Scholars model. Each VA-RWJ Fellow



is expected to complete a graduate level research project related or applicable to U.S. veterans during the 2-year period of the fellowship. Clinical activities and most of the research must be conducted in VA facilities. The VA/University Health Services Research Advisory Committee may provide guidance for the research projects of the VA-RWJ Fellow. All research projects proposed by VA-RWJ Fellows must be approved by the ACOS/E, the ACOS/R&D, and the R&D Committee.

11. **Funding.** A limited amount of research funding may be available to VA-RWJ Fellows for approved research proposals. Potential funding levels, current review procedures, and application requirements should be obtained from the Director, HSR&D Service, VA Central Office (152), 810 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20420.