

# VA ADVANCED FELLOWSHIP IN HEALTH SERVICES RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

## HSR&D MD Fellowship

### General Information

The [Northwest Center for Outcomes Research in Older Adults](#), a VA Health Services Research and Development (HSR&D) Center of Excellence at [VA Puget Sound Health Care System](#), offers a fellowship program in health services for physicians who have completed residency training. The program focuses on preparing physicians for successful careers in academic medicine as independent researchers and trains physicians pursuing a wide variety of research and clinical interests, including General Internal Medicine and its specialties. The program operates in conjunction with the University of Washington (UW) [Division of General Internal Medicine](#) and the UW [Department of Health Services](#).

### Fellowship Curriculum Overview

The two-year fellowship is designed to have physicians develop and apply their research skills by completing a publishable research project. Emphasis is placed on one-on-one mentorship and peer interaction. The curriculum fundamentals include orientation to VA, general research methodology, and written and oral communication skills. The shared emphasis of education, research, and mentorship allows fellows to hone their skills in biostatistics, clinical epidemiology, clinical trial design, medical decision making, health care organizations and delivery, financing of health care, ethical issues related to research, health policy, medical informatics, meta-analytic techniques, qualitative research methods, survey design, grant preparation, and project administration. Additional training in content areas such as quality improvement methods, patient safety investigations and other areas of significant interest to VA is available. Fellows are given the opportunity to pursue intensive training in their particular areas of interest.

### Fellowship Requirements

#### Research

Fellows will spend approximately 75 percent of their time in research and education activities. Fellows are expected to develop and carry out a research project, submit at least one manuscript to a peer-reviewed journal, present at a national meeting, participate in grant writing, learn and use the latest technology in teaching, and participate in and lead inter-professional project teams.

#### Clinical Care

Fellows shall spend approximately 25 percent of their time in clinical care. Typically fellows hold clinic one ½ day per week at the Seattle Division in their respective department (Internal Medicine, Cardiology, etc.).

#### Education

1. **MPH/MS Degree:** Fellows are required to earn a master's degree in Health Services (MPH) or Epidemiology (MS) from the UW [School of Public Health](#), unless the degree was obtained previously (*Please note these programs have separate applications processes and deadlines from the fellowship*).

2. **Work-in-Progress (WIP) Seminars:** All fellows are expected to attend the weekly WIP presentations held throughout the year. This seminar is held in conjunction with the UW National Research Service Award (NRSA) Primary Care Fellowship program and allows fellows to contribute to and benefit from the experiences and knowledge of the larger group of fellows and mentors.

### Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible, candidates must have:

1. Graduated from an Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) accredited residency program  
(*Please Note:* International medical graduates must also have an Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) certificate that is valid indefinitely)
2. Be board certified or board eligible
3. Be a United States citizen
4. Have an active, full and unrestricted license to practice in the United States

### Additional Selection Criteria

Candidates who meet the eligibility requirements will be selected based on their:

**Interest** – candidate desires to lead and shepherd health services research in rapidly changing health care settings and demonstrates special interest in the focus of research at the Seattle HSR&D Center

**Potential** – candidate demonstrates likelihood of ability to succeed in a career incorporating health services research for US Veterans

**Match** – with available mentors. A list of the current Investigators at the Seattle HSR&D Center can be found [here](#).

## Program Co-Directors



### [Chris Bryson, MD MS](#)

Core Investigator, Seattle HSR&D Center  
Staff Physician, Primary Care & Hospital Medicine  
VA Puget Sound Health Care System, Seattle  
Assistant Professor of Medicine, University of Washington  
VA HSR&D MD Fellowship Co-Director  
NRSA Primary Care Fellowship Co-Director (GIM)



### [Bessie Young, MD MPH](#)

Core Investigator, Seattle HSR&D Northwest Center of Excellence  
Investigator, Seattle Epidemiologic Research & Information Center (ERIC)  
Associate Professor of Medicine, Division of Nephrology, University of Washington  
Adjunct Associate Professor, Health Services, University of Washington  
School of Public Health  
VA HSR&D MD Fellowship Co-Director

## Mentorship & Faculty Expertise

### **Mentorship**

Mentorship is an integral part of the fellowship program. Primary faculty and research mentors are the Investigators at the Seattle HSR&D Center, the members of the UW Division of General Internal Medicine, and the members of the UW Departments of Health Services and Epidemiology in the School of Public Health.

### **Faculty Expertise**

Faculty are available to provide expertise in numerous research areas including quality and cost of care, treatment and medical outcomes related to alcohol and substance abuse, cardiovascular disease care and epidemiology, medication adherence, health care delivery, health policy, cost effectiveness, pulmonary and critical care, medical decision making, physician education, geriatrics, prevention, and ambulatory care. It is also possible for faculty from other research centers in Seattle, such as Group Health Research Institute, Harborview Medical Center and the University of Washington, to work with fellows.

## Financial and Other Support

### **Funding**

Funding is provided by [VA Office of Academic Affiliations](#) (OAA) and is guaranteed for two years as long as satisfactory progress is being made by the fellow. Typically, the fellowship is completed in two years; however, fellows can apply for a third year of funding from OAA with the support of mentors and the Program Co-Directors.

### **Stipend Determination**

Starting salaries are competitive and depend upon the number of years of previously completed ACGME accredited physician residency (post-graduate year pay scale, PGY) and on local VA stipend rates.

### **Benefits & Other Support**

Fellows receive all the same benefits (such as health insurance) as VA paid employees.

Other support available during fellowship includes office space with a secure work station equipped with statistical, word processing, and database management software and statisticians offer in-house consultation and guidance on analysis.

Limited travel funds can be available for fellows who are invited to present VA research data at a national meeting. Fellows seeking a master's degree are usually eligible for financial support or reduced tuition. Tuition support is not provided directly but salaries are comparable such that tuition can be paid by the fellow.

## National & Local Background

### **VA Office of Academic Affairs (OAA)**

OAA started the VA Advanced Fellowship Program in health services in 1991 when a broad array of concerns was challenging health care delivery in VA and across the nation. These concerns ranged from issues involving approaches for incorporating patient perspectives in decision making to quality, cost, and measurement issues. Few physicians had the training in health services research needed to address these critical issues, and the need for such trained physicians was increasingly dramatically. In response, OAA started the training program to develop a cadre of physicians with health services expertise for the VA health care system and to foster the development of high quality health services research and development at local and national levels.

### **MD Fellowship Program at Seattle HSR&D Center**

Over 50 fellows have completed the MD Fellowship Program through the Seattle HSR&D Center in the last decade.

## Location Information

### **Seattle HSR&D Center**

The Seattle HSR&D Center is located downtown Seattle near Interstate 5. Investigators and fellows are co-located on the same floor, in addition to core and project staff. In 2010, the Seattle HSR&D Center supported 78 unique research projects and managed \$14.4 million in funding from federal and non-federal sources. Center funding and productivity increased significantly over the past year due to the operational quality improvement and assessment programs assigned to the Seattle HSR&D Center including the Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) Demonstration Lab Coordinating Center which evaluates VA's patient-centered medical home transition.

### **Seattle Division of the VA Puget Sound Health Care System**

The Seattle Division of the VA Puget Sound Health Care System is a primary and tertiary care center located in the Beacon Hill neighborhood of Seattle. The hospital is approximately 4.5 miles from the Seattle HSR&D Center and seven miles from the main campus of the University of Washington.

## Application Information

### Pre-Application Phone Call

If you plan to apply and you meet the eligibility requirements, we recommend a pre-application telephone call with the co-directors, Drs. Bryson and Young. Please email the Fellowship Coordinator, Margaret Nordstrom, your current CV and, a brief summary of your research interests, and indicate that you would like to set up a telephone call with the co-directors to discuss the fellowship. Please be prepared to discuss your research interests and career goals on this call. The purpose of the call is to determine your fit for the program and to assess how well your research interests and goals met the aims of the program. This is not a required part of the application process, but it is recommended.

### Formal Application Steps

To apply, please assemble the following documents:

1. A completed [MD Fellowship Application Form](#)
2. An updated CV
3. A brief statement of research interests or a personal statement, approximately ½ page to one page in length
4. Three letters of recommendation

Please submit the first 3 documents by email to Margaret Nordstrom, the Fellowship Coordinator, at: [Margaret.Nordstrom@va.gov](mailto:Margaret.Nordstrom@va.gov). Letters of recommendation can be sent directly by mail or fax to:

Margaret Nordstrom  
Fellowship Coordinator  
Seattle HSR&D Center  
1100 Olive Way, Suite 1400  
Seattle, WA 98101  
Telephone: (206) 277-4417  
Fax: (206) 768-5343

Any questions about the application or the process should be addressed to Margaret.

### Deadline

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis; however, all application materials must be received by **December 1<sup>st</sup>** to be considered for the following academic year, starting July 1<sup>st</sup>, in order to allow sufficient time for interview and hiring processes.

*Please note: Applications to the master's degree programs within UW [School of Public Health](#) have separate applications processes and deadlines from the fellowship. The deadlines vary by program but tend to be by the end of the year.*

## Interviewing & Hiring

### Interviewing

The interview process is individualized and often depends on the distance of the candidate to Seattle and the preferences of the Program Co-Directors. Select candidates are invited for interviews after all application materials have been received and reviewed. Interviews generally take place September through December. The Fellowship Coordinator works with the candidate and the selected interviewers to design an interview schedule. VA funding does not allow for the reimbursement of interview-related travel expenses. Program Co-Directors typically make admission decisions between December and January.

### Hiring

Once an offer is accepted and a target start date is negotiated, the Fellowship Coordinator will provide instructions on the hiring process and procedures. Note that in order to be allowed to hold clinic, candidates must first be credentialed and privileged by VA Puget Sound Health Care System.

After the VA Puget Sound Credentialing and Privileging Office (C&PO) approves the candidate, the fellowship appointment paperwork is submitted to OAA. OAA must approve and issue the fellowship appointment on the national level before the Human Resources (HR) office in Seattle at VA Puget Sound Health Care System can proceed to hire.

The VA Puget Sound HR office requires fellows to have a physical exam completed at the Seattle Division prior to hiring. Upon successful completion of the physical, HR will generate a local offer letter and schedule orientation. All fellows must attend the 2-day New Employee Orientation hosted by HR. This orientation is designed to orient new employees with VA policies and procedures and to complete critical paperwork (health insurance, direct deposit, etc).

## Other Related Fellowships

### UW National Research Service Award (NRSA) Primary Care Research Fellowship

The University of Washington offers fellowship training under a grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) for individuals with an interest in pursuing research and academic careers in the primary medical care disciplines of General Internal Medicine, Family Medicine, and General Pediatrics.

NRSA fellows and VA HSR&D MD and PhD fellows meet together weekly, with the Program Co-Directors, for the joint WIP seminars.

In addition to serving as co-director of the VA HSR&D MD Fellowship, Dr. Bryson also directs the General Internal Medicine area of the NRSA Fellowship.

For more information, please visit the NRSA Fellowship website at:  
<http://nrsafellowship.weebly.com/index.html>