



## **UCLA Postdoctoral Fellowship Training Program in Global HIV Prevention Research**

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)**

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#### **What are the eligibility criteria?**

To be eligible for this postdoctoral fellowship, you must be:

- A postdoctoral scholar (completed PhD or MD at the time of fellowship appointment) who is focusing on global/international HIV research; and
  - A citizen or legal permanent resident of the U.S. at the time of fellowship appointment.
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#### **Who sponsors the fellowship?**

This fellowship program is offered by the Division of Infectious Diseases of the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. It is funded by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), one of the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH), through a T32 funding mechanism (T32MH080634).

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#### **When does the fellowship begin and how long does it last?**

Applications are accepted in the Fall, and usually due mid-December or early January. The fellowship begins on July 1 of each year. In some cases, an exception can be made to start after July 1.

The fellowship lasts for up to three years. For example, a fellowship starting on July 1, 2019 would end on June 30, 2022. It is possible to complete the fellowship early, and a few of our former fellows have done this (by securing a faculty position prior to the fellowship end date).

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#### **How many new fellowship slots are available each year?**

There are typically two new fellowship slots available each year.

One slot is open only to MDs who have gone through the formal clinical infectious diseases fellowship in the Division of Infectious Diseases at UCLA. They are selected through the ID Division at UCLA through a standard matching process. Once matched and placed at UCLA, those who express an interest in global HIV prevention research may be identified for enrollment into this fellowship. As such, we do not accept applications from MDs outside of this mechanism.

The other slot is open to non-MD (e.g., PhD) postdoctoral applicants, whom we recruit directly. The PhD can be in any discipline (psychology, public health, public policy, sociology, anthropology, biological sciences, etc.), as long the applicant is focused on an academic career in global HIV research.

As two new fellows are added each year and the fellowship lasts for three years, at any point in time there will be a total of six fellows enrolled: two first-year, two second-year, and two third-year fellows.

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### **Who directs the fellowship and what is their experience?**

The fellowship program is directed by Judith Currier, MD and Pamina Gorbach, MHS, DrPH.

Dr. Currier is an internationally-recognized expert in the field and has extensive experience in clinical trial design, implementation, and analysis. As Chief of the UCLA Division of Infectious Diseases, national Vice-Chair of the AIDS Clinical Trials Group, and PI of the UCLA AIDS Prevention and Treatment Clinical Trials Unit, she has a background mentoring trainees in patient oriented research focused on preventing AIDS. In addition to leading the overall training program together with Dr. Gorbach, Dr. Currier serves as a research mentor for trainees. Her work in the AIDS Clinical Trials Group as well as in the USAID funded Expanding Quality Improvement for HIV/AIDS in Malawi provide the needed infrastructure for successful trainee research. In addition, locally, the UCLA CARE Center, provides the infrastructure for the conduct of translational patient-oriented research and will facilitate the ability of trainees to access patient biological, clinical and laboratory data including specimens. She provides the behavioral trainees with access to training in the biological and clinical areas to conduct the translational research responsive to the new NIH OAR Priorities. She also works with those dually appointed as infectious disease fellows to have appropriate clinical responsibilities that allow development of their research training.

Dr. Gorbach is a Professor in the Department of Epidemiology in the Fielding School of Public Health and the Division of Infectious Diseases in the David Geffen School of Medicine, at The University of California, Los Angeles. She focuses on the biobehavioral epidemiology of sexual health, especially how HIV transmission, acquisition and progression is effected by substance abuse. Dr. Gorbach leads the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) funded consortium of nine North American HIV/AIDS cohorts entitled Collaborating Consortium of Cohorts NIDA Producing Opportunities (C3PNO) that includes the cohort she is MPI of in Los Angeles entitled "The mSTUDY". At UCLA besides teaching and mentoring masters and doctoral students, postdocs and fellows, Dr. Gorbach heads a NIH Fogarty supported training program in HIV/AIDS in Cambodia and is MPI of the NIMH supported T32 Postdoctoral Training Program in Global HIV Prevention Research. She is co-director of the UCLA Center for AIDS Research Program on Biobehavioral Epidemiology and Substance Use and is a member of the Center for HIV Identification, Prevention and Treatment Services (CHIPTS) and the UCLA Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center. Dr. Gorbach heads the Biobehavioral Assessment Research Center in the Fielding School of Public Health. Her global health experience includes Cambodia, Vietnam, Peru, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Mali, Malawi, South Africa, and Ghana.

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### **How long has this fellowship existed, and how successful has it been?**

The UCLA Postdoctoral Fellowship Training Program in Global HIV Prevention Research accepted its first fellow in 2007. Alumni have gone on to fill assistant professor positions at UCLA, Johns Hopkins, UC Irvine, UT Southwestern, and Charles R. Drew University. K awards have been funded on topics such as the impact of cannabinoids on inflammation,

viral load, and symptoms of distress among persons living with HIV, evaluation of the PrEP cascade in pregnant and breastfeeding women in South Africa, and on microbiome and mucosal immune interactions in the pathogenesis of HIV-1 transmission.

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### **What are the goals of the fellowship?**

Original research is the heart of the fellowship, and **our efforts are focused on ensuring that fellows successfully transition into independent investigators**. In year 1, fellows will design a pilot research protocol and also write the first draft of an initial grant. Data collected and analyzed through this pilot research project can then be used as part of the fellow's application for a NIH K award or similar grant (typically submitted about 18 months into the fellowship) that will take the fellow into a first faculty position. Please note the fellowship is not able to guarantee automatic transition into faculty positions at UCLA, regardless of whether or not a K award is acquired.

Fellows will also have access to large quantitative and qualitative data sets, and will engage in secondary data analyses in order to submit papers for publication.

Coursework for some fellows can include attaining a master's degree (in clinical research, public health, or public policy), or auditing relevant courses to strengthen knowledge and skills in specific areas.

Mentorship is tailored as much as possible to meet the specific needs of each fellow, and includes hands-on mentoring on HIV research design and implementation, research ethics, quantitative and qualitative research methods, grant and proposal writing, protocol development, data analysis, cultural competence, working internationally, budgets, career development, and a host of other key topics in global HIV research.

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### **How is the mentorship structured?**

As fellowship Directors, Drs. Currier and Gorbach serve as the primary career mentors for all fellows, ensuring that the overall goals for the fellow are being attained, milestones met, and that progress toward the fellow's career goals are on target.

Depending on the discipline of the fellow and her/his research focus, either Dr. Currier, Dr. Gorbach or another UCLA faculty mentor will serve as the fellow's primary research mentor, overseeing progress on the fellow's research project(s).

In addition to primary mentors, we can help to engage fellows with any number of informal faculty mentors at UCLA and elsewhere, to provide the fellow with a rich and diverse mentorship experience.

Faculty and staff in the Division of Infectious Diseases are also available to work closely with fellows on issues such as IRB applications, scientific writing, budget development and management, understanding university and Federal policies, and other practical matters key to a successful academic research career.

As our fellowship program is relatively small (6 fellows at any one time), mentorship meetings are regular and frequent, and we strive as much as possible to customize the fellows' experience to meet his or her particular needs, so that s/he can move towards and attain research and career goals and become a successful independent academic HIV researcher.

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**Will there be opportunities for me to spend time doing research in an international setting? If so, how much time is required in-country?**

Yes. In order to pursue global/international HIV research, fellows must spend some portion of their time working in the country and setting where their research will take place. We work closely with fellows to identify an in-country research partner institution, facilitate introductions and collaborations, and support travel. We also ensure that fellows will have a degree of cultural competence and practical understanding of the setting(s) to which they are traveling and working in.

The amount of time required in-country varies among fellows, depending on the nature of their research, the needs of their partner institutions, and to some degree the preferences of the fellow. Some fellows travel to their in-country research site for a few weeks at a time a few times per year, while others may go less frequently for longer periods. We will work closely with all fellows to determine the best strategy for each individual.

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**How will I identify an in-country institution to partner with in conducting my research?**

We work closely with fellows to identify in-country institutions that will be a good fit for the fellows and their research and training needs.

We have existing long-term relationships with institutions in several countries, primarily but not limited to Peru, South Africa, and Malawi. We typically encourage fellows to work with one of our existing partners, as the time it can take for a fellow to forge a new relationship (not to be underestimated) may be prohibitive given the time limitations of the fellowship. Exceptions can sometimes be made if a fellow has a pre-existing, stable relationship with an in-country partner institution, and could "hit the ground running" on a research project without undue delay.

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**What resources are available to me as a postdoctoral fellow?**

As an NIH-funded postdoctoral fellow, you will receive a stipend set by NIH, based on your number of years of experience after finishing your doctoral degree. For details, please visit: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-14-046.html> (scroll down to the section for postdoctoral fellows).

You will also be eligible for the University of California Postdoctoral Scholar Benefits Plan (PSBP). This comprehensive program offers you medical, dental, vision, life and AD&D insurance, short-term disability insurance and voluntary long-term disability insurance. For more information, please visit: <http://www.garnett-powers.com/postdoc/>.

As part of the fellowship package, each fellow will have a budget for each year (funds are administered by the Division of Infectious Diseases at UCLA), to be used to cover the costs of expenses such as coursework, computer equipment and software, travel, conference fees, office supplies, etc. While the specific amount varies somewhat from year to year based on NIH funding, these resources are usually more than adequate to cover necessary expenses. UCLA business and fund managers will work closely with fellows to develop budgets and manage expenses.

Opportunities exist at UCLA to apply for HIV pilot/seed research grants and international travel grants, through bodies such as the UCLA AIDS Institute/CFAR. These are competitive grants (typically offered annually), and can be an important way for fellows to launch or supplement international pilot HIV research projects. We work closely with fellows to submit high-quality proposals for these grants.

There are a number of centers and institutes at UCLA that have cores which provide free consultations and support to fellows and junior faculty on a wide variety of research topics and methods, including the UCLA AIDS Institute/CFAR; the Center for HIV Identification, Prevention and Treatment Services (CHIPTS), and the UCLA Clinical and Translation Science Institute (CTSI). We are well connected to these centers and can provide easy entrée to fellows.

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### **What is the application process?**

Applications are accepted in the fall of each year (the application deadline is typically in mid-December; please refer to the application form for specific date) for a fellowship slot that will open July 1 of the following year.

The application form gives clear instructions on what application materials must be submitted, including letters of recommendation submitted on your behalf.

Interviews (can either be in person or by phone) are arranged in January with the Fellowship Directors. Once all interviews have been completed, we strive to make final decisions and get back to all applicants as soon as possible, ideally by February.

To request an application form/instructions, please contact India Richter ([irichter@mednet.ucla.edu](mailto:irichter@mednet.ucla.edu)). **Please do make sure to consult with Ms. Richter prior to submitting your application to ensure you meet the eligibility criteria and have any questions answered.**

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### **Who can I speak with if I have questions?**

Please email India Richter ([irichter@mednet.ucla.edu](mailto:irichter@mednet.ucla.edu)) with any questions. Correspondence can take place via email or a time can be arranged to speak by phone.

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### **What are some other related fellowship opportunities?**

The UCLA Center for World Health maintains a set of links on *Funding Resources for Global Health Trainees* on its website, at: <http://www.worldhealth.med.ucla.edu/index.php/learn/global-health-careers/funding-resources-for-global-health-trainees/>.

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